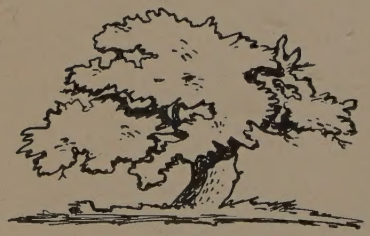
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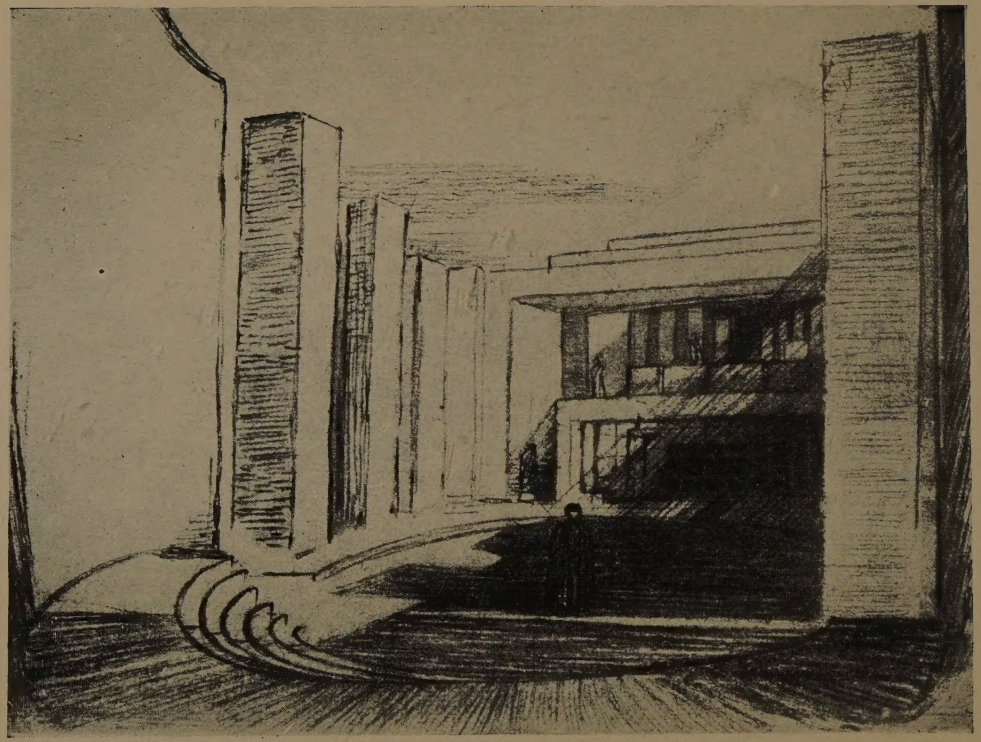
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BRITISH DRAMA



DESIGN FOR A THEATRE OPEN TO THE AIR, THE SUN AND MOON

BRITISH DRAMA

AN HISTORICAL SURVEY FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO THE PRESENT TIME

BY

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NOTE

In the text of this book the titles of plays are quoted in the original form and spelling on first mention, and, with the exception of some early plays, are thereafter modernized. In the index all titles are modernized for ease of reference.

PREFACE

THIS book could not be, and is not intended to be, exhaustive. It attempts to trace the history of our theatre from its most primitive origins in the Middle Ages to the present day, and for this purpose it deals rather with tendencies than with individuals. Genius has constantly been forging new weapons for the theatre to wield, but in essence the theatre has remained one and the same. The tragic passion of Æschylus is the tragic passion of Shakespeare even as it is the tragic passion of Ibsen. The mirth of Euripides springs from the same fount as the mirth of Jonson or of Synge. All through the ages the terror and the awe and the laughter have been the same, minor variations only being made to accord with the spirit of changing generations. This being so, my aim has been to deal with the main manifestations of our English theatre rather than to write a series of brief criticisms of particular writers and of their works. No apology is made for the inclusion or the exclusion of any individual dramas, save that I have endeavoured to take as examples those plays which seem to me most expressive of the tendencies here discussed. I am aware that there are many tragedies and many comedies, both Elizabethan and modern, which may appear to deserve greater attention than others to which I have devoted considerable space. On the other hand, it is often the lesser work which gives us the surest clues to the general tone of an age. Shakespeare's tragedies are not truly typical of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods because of Shakespeare's greatness. If we would seek for those broader currents which flow silently and deeply from age to age we must search out Shakespeare's lesser companions and from their work divine the chief movements of which they form only a part.

As the drama can never be disconnected from the playhouse itself, each division of this brief survey is prefaced by a sketch of the theatres and the audiences of the period treated in the following pages. I have emphasized sufficiently here and elsewhere my belief that no true understanding of the drama of any age is possible without some formulated conception of the spectators for whom the particular plays were written and of the theatres in which they were intended to be produced. Regarding the drama as inseparable from the theatre, I have dealt but slightly with that remarkable activity in poetic playwriting which extended from 1795 to the end of the nineteenth century. Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge, and the rest were great poets, but for the most part they were poor dramatists, and even Byron declared that he wrote most of his dramas for the closet rather than the stage. They can claim, therefore, no more than scant attention in a work which is intended as an outline of English dramatic, and theatrically dramatic, literature.

In planning this work I have allowed full space to the modern dramatists, not only because the drama of our own day deserves our attention, but because of the belief that in the present-day theatre we have a revival of dramatic interest comparable only with that of the Elizabethan period. No age between the beginning of the seventeenth century and the end of the nineteenth century can show such a galaxy of great creative writers as our own age possesses. Tragedy and comedy alike have been revitalized, and we may look forward to a still fuller and even more artistic development of this newly awakened art in succeeding decades. To deal satisfactorily with living writers is always a difficult task, but I have attempted, as far as lay in my power, to test the works of to-day by the masterpieces of the past. It may be that there are some mistaken judgments, but so far as such a personal art as criticism can be objective I have endeavoured to make it so. The treatment of these modern dramatists is largely historical; an effort to estimate in wider terms the main creative forces in the theatre of to-day and to express some more

deeply held critical beliefs has been reserved for the final chapter, which sums up data presented earlier in the book.

It is my opinion that only through a wide survey can a true appreciation be gained of what the English theatre stands for. Only by watching its slow development in the Middle Ages, its flower-time which was Shakespeare, its decay in the Augustan period, its winter's sleep in the early nineteenth century, and its sending forth of new shoots in our times, can we realize the noble stock which it is our duty to tend and to nourish with our deepest care and attention. Art is international, the drama one of its chiefest modes of expression; thus the English theatre is in a sense a heritage of humanity.

I wish to express my sincerest gratitude and thanks to Mr Harold H. Child for the great help and for the many suggestions he has given me during the reading of the proofs of this volume. I have to thank also His Grace the Duke of Devonshire for permission to reproduce some copyright designs in his possession; the Librarian of Chatsworth for his courtesy in procuring this permission and for other assistance; Mr Bache Matthews and Mr Paul Shelving for allowing the reproduction of the latter's design for Kaiser's *Gas;* and Mr Huntley Carter for furnishing the original photograph of Meierhold's theatre. The Chatsworth designs are from photographs taken at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Mr Gordon Craig, besides many other courtesies and helpful aids, for which I am deeply grateful, has kindly given permission to use as the frontispiece his design for an open-air theatre from *The Theatre Advancing.*

A. N.

June 1925

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From Gordon Craig's *The Theatre Advancing* (1921), by permission of the author and Messrs Constable and Co., Ltd. This gives an excellent idea of the style of Mr Craig's designs, while it is symbolic, at the same time, of one sphere at least of modern theatrical endeavour.

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"In a Play-house 1 (which is trimmed with Hangings 2 and covered with Curtains 3) Comedies, and Tragedies are acted, wherein memorable things are represented; as here the History of the Prodigal Son 4 and his Father 5 by whom he is entertained, being returned home. The Players act being in disguise; the Fool 6 maketh jests. The chief of the Spectators sit in the Gallery 7, the common sort stand on the ground 8 and clap their hands if any thing pleases them."

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BRITISH DRAMA

PART I

FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO SHAKESPEARE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY. THE DRAMA OF GREECE AND ROME

THE mimetic instinct is confined to no single nation; it is universal in its appeal, and reveals itself as one of the most primitive of human emotions. The desire of men and women to garb themselves in the semblance of attendants upon a god, even to take upon themselves the god-form in its august majesty; the desire to re-enact the sacred stories, whether they be of Grecian deities or of Jehovah and Christ; the later desire of the peasant to place himself, if but for a fleeting moment, in the position of a courtier, or of the courtier to forget for a time the intrigues and the cares of his state in a fondly imagined Arcady—all of these are but manifestations of the one primeval passion which reveals itself in church liturgy, in folk-mummings, and in masquerades, no less than in the tragedies of Æschylus and of Shakespeare. This universal nature of acting and of drama renders a study of the stage at once more fascinating and more difficult than the study of almost any other type of literature. It demands, in the first place, a careful investigation of religious ritual and of folk-customs, and, in the second, an equally careful investigation of the literatures of diverse races. No account of English drama can possibly be complete unless reference be made to the services of the early Church, to the relics of pagan ceremonials preserved in a

half-fossilized form among the peasantry, and to the development of dramatic art in Greece, in Rome, in France, in Spain, in Germany, and in the Scandinavian countries.

The fact that the passion for the drama is thus universal necessitates a further introductory remark. It makes the theatre one of the most traditional and, at the same time, most subtly symbolic of all literary media. There are far greater breaks to be found in the development of lyric and narrative poetry than there are to be discovered in the development of the drama. At the same time, drama continually advances to meet the needs of a particular age; and our task is, therefore, to trace at one and the same moment the relationship between the plays of one period and another, and to indicate the gradual lines of progression governing the whole world of the theatre. Thus, for example, the romantic tragi-comedy made popular in the early seventeenth century by Beaumont and Fletcher is, when examined closely, seen to be largely a development of the Shakespearian romantic comedy of the late sixteenth century. The one is bound intimately with the other; yet the spirit of *As You Like It* is removed, as by centuries, from the spirit of *A King and No King*. The one breathes to us the atmosphere of Elizabeth's Court, peopled with Drakes and Raleighs; the other tells of the vitiated tone of an enervated Cavalier society. The traditionalism and progressive nature of drama, this interrelation between the dramatic literatures of various races, this primitive emotion out of which all acting and 'feigning' spring, will, as far as is possible in the space of this volume, be kept duly in mind.

It is fitting perhaps, that a start should be made with the drama of classical Greece and Rome, although, in all considerations of the history of English tragedy and comedy, it must be borne in mind that the medieval mysteries which later developed into the full florescence of Elizabethan drama were indigenous to the soil, that the direct influence of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides is not visible till centuries had elapsed, and that even Seneca's tragedies did not come to take their place in the elaboration of the English drama till the sixteenth century. In Greece, as

in most lands, both comedy and tragedy took their rise from religious ceremonial. The wine-flushed devotees of Dionysus, arraying themselves in symbolic garments, led the way toward the satyric comedy; the more stately worshippers at the altars of majestic gods showed men the possibilities of tragic emotion. It is not easy, because of the lack of extant texts, to study the rise and progress of Greek comedy; but, happily, there are several masterpieces of the greater tragic dramatists which can convey to us both the grandeur of their efforts and the slow progressive movement which extends from the non-dramatic choral chants to the liberated dramas of Euripides. The course of Greek drama, as far as it is known, may briefly be outlined. From a common chant the ceremonial song developed into a primitive duologue between a leader, dressed probably in the robes of the god, and the chorus. The song became elaborated; it developed narrative elements, and soon reached a stage in which the duologue told in primitive wise some story of the deity. Further forward movements were introduced. Two leaders instead of one made their appearance. The chorus gradually sank into the background, no longer taking the place of a protagonist; it became, with Sophocles, merely an 'ideal spectator,' and then, with Euripides, simply a medium for the introduction of lyrical and musical passages often unrelated to the general action of the tragedy. Had there been any great successor to the three outstanding Greek dramatists tragedy must have inevitably taken on other forms. The chorus would have disappeared, and a more modern type of drama would have been evolved.

It is not necessary here to enter into the details of Greek dramatic activity, but a few notes on the main characteristics of that activity may be relevant, principally such as display the inherent differences between the Athenian stage and the modern.

In the first place, the plays were always regarded as part of a vast religious ceremonial. The audience was filled with a sense of the awe and majesty befitting the occasion, and, as a consequence, only a certain august tone could be

allowed in the development of action and of dialogue. The plots, moreover, were, because of this, stereotyped. Only a very limited number of themes were permitted to the dramatists, so that construction, characterization, and language counted for far more than they could do in the Elizabethan period, when a novel tale, an exciting episode, or an adventurous scene might hold children from play and old men from the chimney-corner.

The playhouses were the vast amphitheatres of which shattered relics are still preserved on the outskirts of Athens and elsewhere. These tremendous circles of stone were capable of seating thousands of spectators, the aristocrats and the humbler citizens meeting together for the one purpose of witnessing the tragedy enacted before them. As a consequence, the Greek drama is statuesque; it allows of no violent movement; the dialogue is stately and majestic rather than racy and free. The *cothurnus,* the megaphone masks, the inevitable necessity for slow action, kept the plays within bounds which never could confine the Elizabethans. At the same time, the heterogeneous audience, composed of many classes and varieties of men, gave to the Greek drama a certain tone which it shares with the drama of Elizabethan times. There is a healthiness of atmosphere, a breadth of passion, a universality of appeal, alien to the more aristocratic and narrower playhouses of the reigns of Charles I and of Charles II.

This drama of Greece proved the model for the Roman tragedy. Unfortunately, few specimens of Latin serious plays have come down to us. We have records of a number of writers famous in their day, but only the tragedies of Seneca have been preserved in anything like a complete state. The Senecan dramas were unquestionably closet plays not intended for presentation in the theatre. They show clearly the influence of Euripides, and show, moreover, the weakening of the tragic spirit. They are melodramatic, lacking in majesty of tone, immersed in horrors and physical torments. They tell of an age less great, less manly, less noble than that of Periclean Athens. It is the Senecan drama, however, which exercised most influence

upon the English, partly because of those very melodramatic elements, partly because Latin had been more treasured than Greek during the long era which we know as the Dark and Middle Ages. Alongside of Seneca we have the comedies of Terence and of Plautus, themselves far-off descendants of the satiric comedies of Aristophanes. Aristophanes himself had brought comedy to the height of perfection in Athenian times, but his plays, by reason of their local and topical touches, failed to find direct imitators elsewhere. The Aristophanic satiric type, on the other hand, developed naturally into the New Comedy of Greece, and it was this New Comedy which Terence and Plautus adapted or endeavoured to imitate. The plays of Terence were obviously written for a small and aristocratic audience. They are witty, alert, cleverly constructed, but they lack breadth and they lack nobility. Because of their style they were never lost. All through the so-called Dark Ages they preserved their place in monastery and in convent. Along with Virgil, Terence takes his stand as one of the chief missionaries of classical culture amid the surrounding grotesqueries of the Gothic imagination.

No better evidence could be found of Terence's influence in an age when drama seems completely dead than the plays of Hrotswitha, a tenth-century nun who wrote a series of dramas at Gandersheim in Saxony. "There are many Catholics," she says in her preface,[1]

> And we cannot entirely acquit ourselves of the charge, who, attracted by the polished elegance of the style of pagan writers, prefer their works to the holy Scriptures. There are others who, although they are deeply attached to the sacred writings and have no liking for most pagan productions, make an exception in favour of the works of Terence, and, fascinated by the charm of the manner, risk being corrupted by the wickedness of the matter. Wherefore I, the strong voice of Gandersheim,[2] have not hesitated to imitate in my writings a poet whose works are so widely read.

[1] The quotations from the works of Hrotswitha are given from Christopher St John's rendering in the "Medieval Library" (1923). The earliest edition of the original plays (all written in Latin) is that by Konrad Celtes, published at Nürnberg in 1501. The standard modern text is that given by Charles Magnin in *Le Théâtre de Roswitha.*

[2] The name Hrotswitha seems to mean 'strong voice'; the Latin reads "ego, clamor validus Gandersheimensis."

Hrotswitha's plays are all on religious themes: *Gallicanus* treats of the chastity of Constance in the reign of the Emperor Constantine; *Dulcitius* of the martyrdom of Agape, Chionia, and Irena, *Callimachus* of the resurrection of Drusiana and Callimachus; *Paphnutius* of the conversion of Thais; *Abraham* of the repentance of Mary; *Sapientia* of the martyrdom of Faith, Hope, and Charity in the time of Hadrian. In tone they owe nothing to the Latin poet, although the comic figure of Dulcitius is well managed; but in style they display quite clearly that the profession of imitation in the preface was not without foundation.

There may have been other Latin dramas similar to those of Hrotswitha; but all record of them has perished. The further influence of Terence is not visible until we reach the age of humanism in the sixteenth century; but we must never forget that his works, for others besides Hrotswitha, were set apart from the rest of the relics of paganism, and that others risked infection from the matter for the sake of the manner.[1]

It is just possible that a further influence on the English and Continental drama came from Rome. During the age of decadence theatrical exhibitions in the Empire tended toward spectacle, buffoonery, and farce. The *histriones* descended from the heights to provide mere horseplay for the spectators. Crude as such efforts must have been, they were still largely mimetic in character, and it is hard to believe that even in the ages which succeeded the wild incursions of the Goths, the Huns, and the Vandals some sort of Roman histrionic forms was not preserved. There is, it is true, scarcely a record of such, but it is highly unlikely that any account of wandering *histriones* should have been set down for us in an age when parchment was kept for more serious affairs. A parallel instance may serve to make this clear. In 1642 the playhouses were closed by order of the Puritan authorities.

[1] The play called Χριστὸς Πάσχων, which was attributed to St Gregory Nazianzene (fourth century), has lately been proved to be a tenth-century work (see the edition of J. G. Brambs, Leipzig, 1885). It displays interesting reminiscences of Greek drama.

They were not opened again until 1660. It was long thought that, with the exception of D'Avenant's operas, performed in 1656 and 1658, this period of eighteen years was an entire blank for the theatre. Minute investigation into the newspapers and documents of the time, however, is proving that audiences were fairly well catered for by itinerant actors, playing sometimes regular dramas, sometimes mere 'drolls' or farces. Taking into consideration the meagreness of our knowledge of medieval life, it does not seem to be an unreasonable suggestion that relics of Roman comedy were carried on by successive generations of minstrels, acrobats, and *jongleurs* up to the time when the mysteries and the miracles began to make their first appearance. What ever truth may lie in this suggestion, however, the fact remains that of regular drama of any sort there was absolutely none during the period which intervened between the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of the mysteries. There may have been, among the country folk, reminiscences of ancient pagan ritual in the form of crude interludes such as have been preserved even down to the present day; but these remnants of the heathen beliefs of past times were fossilized and incapable of further creative progression.[1] Memories of Terence, relics of a debased and long-forgotten Roman farce, folk-plays of a rough and inartistic sort, may all have played their part in the development of early English drama; but this English drama, in spite of any impressions made from those sources, is as indigenous as the drama of Greece, springing from the living faith of the people, written for the people, and acted by the people.

[1] The question of the influence of 'folk-drama' on the religious plays of the Middle Ages and on comedy of the sixteenth century is an important one; but because of its complexity it has been omitted here. The sword-dance with the various ritual performances at village-festivals certainly contributed to the development of later drama. The scope of this influence is well outlined by H. H. Child in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. v, Chapter II, and has been exhaustively dealt with in E. K. Chambers' *The Mediæval Stage*.

CHAPTER II

THE GROWTH OF NATIVE DRAMA

Tropes and Liturgical Plays

THE indigenous dramatic activity referred to in the preceding chapter took its rise, as did the drama of the Greeks, from the religion of the time. Whatever it borrowed from other sources it was in origin, and remained for long, distinctively a creation of the Church. The Church was everything for the Middle Ages. Corruption among the clergy may have been rife, but here, after all, was rest for the weary, solace for the afflicted, bread for the hungry, succour for the oppressed; here was not only the church, but the school, the meeting-place, the centre of art and, still more important, of amusement. The religion of the Middle Ages was a broad religion. It was serious and mystical, but it allowed of laughter. Beside the real bishop stood the boy bishop with his riotous crowd of hilarious attendants. The Church was ready and eager to provide for the people all the delight as well as the spiritual uplifting which it could by means of art and letters. Moreover, it was ready to show to an uneducated folk the Scriptural story in visible wise, thus counteracting the lack of vernacular versions of the Holy Writ.

The very Mass itself is an effort in this direction. The whole of this service with its accompanying ritual is a symbolic representation of the most arresting episodes in the life of Christ, and it is but natural that the clergy should have attempted to make it even more outwardly symbolic as the knowledge of Latin among the ordinary people passed farther and farther into the background. More especially they must have seen the necessity, on the great feast-days of Christmas and of Easter, of bringing before the congregation the salient facts of the New Testament story.

Throughout the early centuries of the Catholic Church

gradual movements are to be discerned, all tending in the same direction. Their history has been traced by many scholars, and need not detain us here. Suffice it to notice that by the ninth century tropes, or additional texts to the ecclesiastical music, were being supplied by various writers, and that these tropes frequently assumed a dialogue and hence a dramatic form. Originally they were portions of the Mass service itself as elaborated for the celebration of Easter and other feasts. Of them all the most important is the so-called *Quem Quæritis,* a slight dramatization of the coming of the three Marys to the tomb of Christ.

Quem quæritis in sepulchro, [o] Christicolæ?

chants one of the choir, personating the angel.

Iesum Nazarenum crucifixum, o cælicolæ,

answer others, to which comes the reply:

Non est hic, surrexit sicut prædixerat.
Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit de sepulchro.[1]

Very soon, as was indeed inevitable, these tropes became detached from the regular service; they were presented by themselves, and came to associate with themselves an accompanying dramatic ritual. The most instructive document concerning this development is that contained in the *Concordia Regularis,* a series of rules devised by Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, for the use of the Benedictines in the tenth century. It shows clearly that the drama as such had almost come into being. Ethelwold's instructions are as follows:[2]

Dum tertia recitatur lectio, quatuor fratres induant se, quorum unus alba indutus ac si ad aliud agendum ingrediatur atque

[1] The text is quoted from E. K. Chambers, *The Mediæval Stage,* ii, 9, who gives it from the St. Gall MS. 484, f. 11. The translation runs as follows:

"Whom do you seek in the sepulchre, O Christians?"
"Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, O heavenly ones."
"He is not here; He has risen even as He said before.
Go; proclaim He has risen from the grave."

[2] The following translation is by E. K. Chambers (*op. cit.,* ii, 14–15): "While the third lesson is being chanted, let four brethren vest themselves. Let one of these, vested in an alb, enter as though to take part in the

latenter sepulchri locum adeat, ibique manu tenens palmam quietus sedeat. Dumque tertium percelebratur responsorium residui tres succedant, omnes quidem cappis induti turribula cum incensu manibus gestantes ac pedetemptim ad similitudinem querentium quid veniant ante locum sepulchri. Aguntur enim hæc ad imitationem angeli sedentis in monumento atque mulierum cum aromatibus venientium ut unguerent corpus Ihesu. Cum ergo ille residens tres velut erraneos ac aliquid querentes viderit sibi adproximare incipiat mediocri voce dulcisono cantare *Quem quæritis:* quo decantato fine tenus respondeant hi tres uno ore *Ihesum Nazarenum.* Quibus ille, *Non est hic: surrexit sicut prædixerat. Ite nuntiate quia surrexit a mortuis.* Cuius iussionis voce vertant se illi tres ad chorum dicentes *Alleluia: resurrexit dominus.* Dicto hoc rursus ille residens velut revocans illos dicat antiphonam *Venite et videte locum:* hæc vero dicens surgat et erigat velum ostendatque eis locum cruce nudatum, sed tantum linteamina posita quibus crux involuta erat. Quo viso deponant turribula quæ gestaverunt in eodem sepulchro sumantque linteum et extendant contra clerum, ac veluti ostendentes quod surrexerit dominus, etiam non sit illo involutus, hanc canant antiphonam, *Surrexit dominus de sepulchro,* superponantque linteum altari. Finita antiphona Prior, congaudens pro triumpho regis nostri quod devicta morte surrexit, incipiat hymnum *Te Deum laudamus:* quo incepto una pulsantur omnia signa.

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service, and let him approach the sepulchre without attracting attention and sit there quietly with a palm in his hand. While the third respond is chanted, let the remaining three follow, and let them all, vested in copes, bearing in their hands thuribles with incense, and stepping delicately as those who seek something, approach the sepulchre. These things are done in imitation of the angel sitting in the monument, and the women with spices coming to anoint the body of Jesus. When therefore he who sits there beholds the three approach him like folk lost and seeking something, let him begin in a dulcet voice of medium pitch to sing *Quem quæritis.* And when he has sung it to the end, let the three reply in unison *Ihesum Nazarenum.* So he, *Non est hic . . .* At the word of this bidding let those three turn to the choir and say *Alleluia! resurrexit Dominus!* This said, let the one, still sitting there and as if recalling them, say the anthem *Venite et videte locum.* And saying this, let him rise and lift the veil, and show them the place bare of the Cross, but only the cloths laid there in which the Cross was wrapped. And when they have seen this, let them set down the thuribles which they bare in that same sepulchre, and take the cloth, and hold it up in the face of the clergy, and as if to demonstrate that the Lord has risen and is no longer wrapped therein, let them sing the anthem *Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro,* and lay the cloth upon the altar. When the anthem is done, let the Prior, sharing in their gladness at the triumph of our King, in that, having vanquished death, He rose again, begin the hymn *Te Deum laudamus.* And this begun, all the bells chime out together."

Thus was the drama born, not certainly as a distinctively English growth (for the same movement toward the elaboration of church ritual is to be traced in all the Catholic countries from the west of Europe to the east), yet at the same time in England as elsewhere a form of art springing fundamentally from the lives of the people. The various stages through which this primitive drama moved before it reached the stage of the miracle or mystery play would take too much space to detail here. Its history may be read in Sir E. K. Chambers' two fascinating volumes on *The Mediæval Stage.* The first step, naturally, was the gradual development of the dialogue and the action into little Latin playlets, a step marked by several extant manuscripts in France. The second was the introduction of the vernacular into the midst of the Latin verse. Here we have the invaluable testimony of the works of Hilarius, a scholar of Abelard and himself, it is said, an Englishman. His plays have no great intrinsic value, but they are of immense importance, because in some of them, as, for example, the *Suscitatio Lazari,* fragments of French verse intrude into the Latin text. The drama is slowly moving toward the people. The third step is the composition of purely vernacular plays acted still within the church. Of these only fragmentary examples of English workmanship have been preserved, although there are extant in French a *Sponsus,* telling the story of the wise and the foolish virgins, and a still more important *Adam,* which contains some exceedingly interesting stage directions. All of these were written apparently for performance within the church or cathedral, and the actors presumably were the monks, the priests, and the choir-boys in the service of the church.

It is obvious that, so long as the drama remained in these circumstances, little further progress could be hoped for. The subject-matter of the plays was stereotyped, and the treatment of that subject-matter was largely determined by religious associations. To advance beyond this stage the essential requirement was that the drama should become secularized.

(ii) The Mysteries and Miracle Plays

This secularization of the drama came into being fundamentally because of the circumstances of production. Lacking other means of amusing themselves, the medieval folk naturally crowded in to see these shows at Easter and Christmas; so that, within a short period, the churches were found to be quite inadequate for accommodating the tumultuous bands of men and women intent on witnessing the various plays. The obvious solution was to carry the performances outside into the spaces surrounding the church itself. This change of locality, added to the introduction of the vernacular, marked the clear break-away of the primitive drama from that of which it originally formed a part—the service of the Mass. Unquestionably the rulers of the Church saw the danger lying ahead of them, and they attempted in various ways to stem the tide, not realizing that the drama by this time had become a force with which even they could not contend. Instructions were issued forbidding the clergy to act in the churches; numerous complaints were voiced in the literary works of the time. The conscience of the superior orders was aroused, and Robert Mannyng in his *Handlyng Synne,* a free adaptation of the Anglo-Norman *Manuel des Pechiez,* was no doubt summarizing a good deal of contemporary opinion when he declared that

> Hyt ys forbode hym, yn the decre,
> Myracles for to make or se;
> For myracles, ȝyf thou begynne,
> Hyt ys a gaderyng, a syghte of synne.
> He may yn þe cherche þurghe þys resun
> Pley þe resurrecyun . . .
> ȝuf þou do hyt in weyys or grenys,
> A syghte of synne truly hyt semys.[1]

[1] "It is forbidden him by decree to make or witness miracle plays, because miracle plays, once they are begun, become gatherings and sights of sin. The clerk for this reason may act the Resurrection within the church . . . but if it be done on the roads or the village greens, verily it develops into a sight of sin." Both acting of plays by the clergy and the performance of sacred subjects outside the church were opposed at various times.

The result of this prohibition was distinctly not that which was desired; it merely threw the drama into the hands of those people among whom it was to flourish luxuriantly. The town guilds took over the representation of the plays and carried on the tradition to the sixteenth century.

The miracle plays, or mysteries,[1] which grew out of the early liturgical drama came to fruition in the fourteenth century. Their popularity was conditioned largely by the Corpus Christi festival decreed by Pope Urban IV in 1264 and made fully operative by the Council of Vienne in 1311. On this day, the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, those plays which before had remained heterogeneous and disconnected were bound together into more or less formal cycles dealing with the chief incidents in the Old and the New Testaments and hence revealing to the eager crowd the whole story of the world from the creation of Adam to the resurrection of Christ.

A true appreciation of these plays, or series of plays, can be obtained only when some attention has been paid to the audience and to the method of presentation. The Cornish plays may here be put aside, as the round amphitheatres of stone, relics of which are still to be seen in Cornwall, were purely exceptional; the great cycles of miracle plays now extant were certainly played in no such theatres. When the liturgical drama was still in close connexion with the church no doubt some raised platforms were employed to lift the actors above the throng surrounding them. With the elaboration of the cycles of plays such stationary platforms must have become rather cumbersome and inadequate for the performance of the various dramas, so that by the fourteenth century we find the normal 'theatre' is a pageant run on wheels and taken bodily to different 'stations' throughout the town. These pageants, as a contemporary informs us, were in the shape of "a highe place made like a howse with ij rowmes, beinge open on y^e^ tope: the lower rowme they apparelled and

[1] Technically there is a distinction between the two, miracles dealing with the lives of saints and mysteries with themes taken from the Bible. The two titles, however, were practically synonymous in England.

dressed them selves; and in the higher rowme they played; and they stood vpon 6 wheeles." Sometimes these pageants were wheeled from place to place, sometimes the various plays were acted simultaneously so that time might be saved. Crude spectacular effects must have been aimed at: Noah's Ark was certainly in the likeness of a ship, and a dragon's mouth for Hell was there for every one to see. As a general rule, however, the plays must have been acted without scenery, or with scenery of a most crude kind. Costuming, on the other hand, even though it might be of a grotesque and primitive sort, was an important feature of the performances. One of the entries in the list of expenses at Canterbury was "a payer [1] of new gloves for Seynt Thomas," and at Chelmsford in Essex one John Wright was paid "for makynge a cotte [2] of lether for Christ." An inventory made in 1564 at the latter place included:

ij vyces coates, and ij scalpes, ij daggers (j dagger wanted).
v prophets cappes (one wantinge).
iij flappes for devils.
iiij shepehoks, iiij whyppes (but one gone).

From Coventry we learn that in 1544 "a new coat & a peir of hoes [3] for Gabriell" cost three shillings and fourpence, while at Hull in 1494 "three skins for Noah's coat, making it, and a rope to hang the ship in the kirk" amounted to seven shillings; "a payr of new mytens to Noye" cost fourpence. In 1504 at Leicester "linen cloth for the angels' heads, and Jesus hoose" cost in all just ninepence, and the painting of the angels' wings cost eightpence. At Norwich in 1565 an inventory of property belonging to the Grocers' Company was prepared. This included:

2 cotes & a payre hosen [4] for Eve, stayned.
A cote & hosen for Adam, Steyned.
A cote w^t [5] hosen & tayle for y^e serpente, steyned . . .
An Angell's Cote & over hoses of Apis Skynns.
A face & heare for y^e Father.
2 hearys for Adam & Eve.

[1] pair. [2] coat. [3] hose. [4] of hose. [5] with.





No doubt increasing efforts were made by the great guilds to vie with one another in the presentation of the separate plays, and these inventories give us some idea as to how they went about their work.

The actors in these pieces were all amateurs—members of the various companies who for a time put aside their labour to perform in the sacred mysteries. They were generally paid for their services, but never looked upon their work as a regular profession. At Coventry in 1573 a certain Fawson received from one of the companies fourpence "for hangyng Judas" and fourpence "for Coc croyng." [1] An anonymous actor received as much as three shillings and fourpence "for pleayng God," and five shillings went "to iij whyte [saved] sollys [souls]" and five shillings "to iij blake [damned] sollys." Again, "ij wormes of conseyence" earned sixteenpence between them. In 1483 at Hull Noah received one shilling; in 1494 in the same town Thomas Sawyr for personating God was given tenpence, while Noah's wife received eightpence. The plays and their performances were, therefore, distinctively the creation of the common people, with all the defects and the virtues consequent upon that fact. The *naïveté* visible in the few extracts from the records given above may prepare us for a similar *naïveté* in the treatment of the subject-matter of the plays—both, of course, ultimately dependent upon the people who wrote and who witnessed these dramas. The audience was profoundly devout and sincere, but at the same time it unconsciously sought for ways of escape from its piety in all manner of licence. One way is to be seen in the incredibly coarse *fabliaux* of the time, and later in the equally coarse interludes. Here the moral teachings of the Church and the exalted ideals of chivalry were alike shattered to the ground. Another form of escape has already been touched upon—the various comic ceremonials of which the enthronement of the boy bishop and the Feast of the Asses are the best known. Here piety was thrown to the winds, and licence reigned. The gargoyles in the medieval cathedrals which grin down

[1] cock crowing.

cynically on the worshippers are but another expression of this mood of abandon—a mood, however, which rarely becomes permanent. The gargoyles are but little outbursts of freakishness and gaiety in the midst of the mysterious grandeur of the vaulted nave and the solemn choir. For these people of the Middle Ages there was no such thing as form, as form is known in classic and in neo-classic art. With them drunkenness is found with the most mystic adoration, debauchery with the most lofty moral idealism, cynical ridicule with passionate worship, laughter with the solemnity of sacred thoughts.

It is natural that this grotesquerie should be reproduced in what is in some ways the most typical of medieval creations, the mystery or miracle play. The seriousness is there in all sooth in the figures of God and of His angels, in the terrible passion of Christ and in His resurrection from the dead, but there is also the laughter and the abandon, the escape from too high majesty. At one of the solemnest moments, as, for example, when the shepherds watch the star that was to herald the coming of a King over kings, this laughter breaks out, and we are treated to the fascinating little interlude of the thievish Mak and his companions. The general satire of women could not be stilled even in face of the worship of the Virgin Mary, and Noah's wife becomes a shrew, jeering at her husband and flouting him in a most disrespectful manner. Even the flaming terror of Satan was not exempt; rapidly he developed into a comic figure, roaring and lashing his tail, accompanied by a faithful Vice, who, with dagger of lath, as Shakespeare remembered, cried "Ah, ha!" in farcical wise. Herod, too, suffered in dignity. This slayer of infants, this murderer of murderers, developed into a comic type. His roaring and ranting became a recognized part of the performances of the time, and Shakespeare remembered him also in later days. Formless were the plays in which these characters appeared, lacking literary style often, and always wanting in correct artistic proportions—the work, as eighteenth-century critics would have said, of the "Gothick imagination."

In these dramas, however, lay the seeds that were later to blossom out into the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. There is freshness of fancy here, a free treatment of the material, a rich fund of humour, and at times a true sense of the profound and the tragic. If with the mysteries we are but on the borders of drama proper, we can see clearly the various traditions which later were brought to culmination in the time of Queen Elizabeth.

These mystery plays were not confined to any one district of England. No doubt the record of many of them has perished, but acting can be traced during the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries in over one hundred and twenty-five towns and villages of Britain, extending from the south of England to the north, from the Welsh mountains to Edinburgh and Aberdeen, even across the sea to Dublin and Kilkenny. Some of these towns, no doubt, had no regular series of mystery plays of their own, but numbers must have treasured for centuries their own particular cycles. Those which have come down to us are unquestionably merely an infinitesimal portion of a literary activity once vast and far-reaching in its extent. Four cycles have been preserved—those of Chester (twenty-five plays, with an extra drama probably abandoned at the time of the Reformation), York (forty-eight plays and a small fragment of another), "Towneley" or Wakefield (thirty-two plays), and Coventry (forty-two plays in the *Ludus Coventriæ* and two separate dramas from the Coventry Corpus Christi cycle). Besides these there are extant a Grocers' play of *The Fall* from Norwich; two dramas of *Abraham and Isaac,* one belonging probably to Northampton; a Shipwrights' play from Newcastle-upon-Tyne; the so-called *Croxton Sacrament,* dating from the second half of the fifteenth century; the "Digby" plays of unknown origin; a stray drama of the *Burial and Resurrection;* the Shrewsbury fragments; and a set of five plays in the Cornish tongue, presenting interesting parallels with features in the extant English examples.

It is impossible here to deal with all or even many of

these plays in detail. It may be sufficient to outline the scope of the best-preserved of the series, the York cycle, and, allowing for individual variations, to treat it as a type for all. This cycle, as has been indicated, contains forty-eight separate dramas, as well as a solitary fragment which was probably added toward the close of the fifteenth century. The whole series is now preserved in a manuscript in the British Museum (Add. MS. 35290). In it the various component parts are clearly apportioned to the various guilds, of which something will be said below. A list of the contents of the manuscript will facilitate discussion:

(1) Barkers. *The Creation, Fall of Lucifer.*
(2) Plasterers. *The Creation to the Fifth Day.*
(3) Cardmakers. *The Creation of Adam and Eve.*
(4) Fullers. *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.*
(5) Coopers. *The Disobedience and Fall.*
(6) Armourers. *The Expulsion from Eden.*
(7) Glovers. *Cain and Abel.*
(8) Shipwrights. *The Building of the Ark.*
(9) Fishers and Mariners. *Noah and the Flood.*
(10) Parchminers and Bookbinders. *Abraham's Sacrifice.*
(11) Hosiers. *Israelites in Egypt, Ten Plagues and the Passage of the Red Sea.*
(12) Spicers. *The Annunciation.*
(13) Pewterers and Founders. *Joseph and Mary.*
(14) Tile-thatchers. *The Journey to Bethlehem.*
(15) Chandlers. *The Shepherds.*
(16) Masons. *The Coming of the Three Kings to Herod.*
(17) Goldsmiths. *The Adoration.*
(18) Marchals.[1] *The Flight into Egypt.*
(19) Girdlers and Nailers. *Massacre of the Innocents.*
(20) Spurriers and Lorimers.[2] *The Disputation in the Temple.*
(21) Barbers. *The Baptism of Christ.*
(22) Smiths. *The Temptation of Christ.*
(23) Couriours.[3] *The Transfiguration.*
(24) Capmakers. *The Woman taken in Adultery and the Raising of Lazarus.*
(25) Skinners. *Entry into Jerusalem.*
(26) Cutlers. *The Conspiracy.*
(27) Baxters.[4] *The Last Supper.*
(28) Cordwainers. *The Agony and Betrayal.*

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[1] Men who shod horses.
[2] Makers of bits for horses.
[3] Curriers of leather.
[4] Bakers.

(29) Bowers [1] and Fletchers.[2] *Peter's Denial and Christ before Caiaphas.*
(30) Tapiterers [3] and Couchers. *The Dream of Pilate's Wife and Christ before Pilate.*
(31) Lysterers.[4] *The Trial before Herod.*
(32) Cooks and Waterleaders. *The Second Accusation before Pilate with the Remorse of Judas.*
(33) Tilemakers. *The Judgment on Christ.*
(34) Shearmen. *Calvary.*
(35) Pinners [5] and Painters. *The Crucifixion.*
(36) Butchers. *The Mortification of Christ.*
(37) Sadlers. *The Harrowing of Hell.*
(38) Carpenters. *The Resurrection.*
(39) Winedrawers. *Christ appears to Mary Magdalen.*
(40) Sledmen. *Travellers to Emmaus.*
(41) Hatmakers, Masons, and Labourers. *The Purification of Mary.*
(42) Scriveners. *The Incredulity of Thomas.*
(43) Tailors. *The Ascension.*
(44) Potters. *The Descent of the Holy Spirit.*
(45) Drapers. *The Death of Mary.*
(46) Wefferes.[6] *The Appearance of our Lady to Thomas.*
(47) Ostlers. *The Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin.*
(48) Mercers. *The Judgment Day.*
(49) [fragment]. Innholders. *The Coronation of Our Lady.*

Such is the register of the plays in the British Museum manuscript, and it may be taken as fairly typical of the similar series of plays being performed all over Britain. The first point of interest about them is the close connexion of the plays with the trade guilds. It might be said, indeed, that without these trade guilds the regular cycles of mystery plays could never have come into being. The guilds provided the actors, and, what is more important, they provided the money for the pageants, the primitive 'scenery,' and the costumes. It will be noted how in many instances plays were given to guilds specially qualified to deal with them; thus the mariners took the Flood, and the goldsmiths the Adoration. Secondly, it will be observed that these plays cannot be judged critically on any standards such as are applicable to other dramas. Each play stands alone,

[1] Makers of bows.
[2] Those who feathered arrows.
[3] Makers of tapestry.
[4] Dyers.
[5] Makers of pins.
[6] Weavers.

yet all are but parts in a vast cycle which is a kind of *Divina Commedia* in the medieval sense of the term. Moreover, there could be nothing more futile than to attempt a general criticism of these works, or even of particular cycles, as one can criticize the plays of Marlowe or of Shakespeare. For the mystery plays have no author, or countless authors, put it in which way we will. The cycles were constantly changing. Unquestionably portions were added to or taken away from particular plays. The whole cycles are typically medieval in their almost complete anonymity. All we may do, therefore, is to indicate some of the chief points in one or two of the dramas or separate cycles, stressing chiefly those elements which might be held to offer hints to the regular dramatists of later years.

From the literary point of view the York cycle is possibly the least entertaining. Its high-water mark of excellence is to be found in the last few plays dealing with the Passion of Christ, but even here there is little that strikes us as great or even as possessing the potentialities of greatness. The value of this cycle is largely historic and linguistic. The Chester cycle presents, on the other hand, certain features of interest. This series may have been influenced slightly by the plays of York, and certainly something seems taken from the great French *Mystère du Vieil Testament,* but there is about these dramas a genuine devoutness of tone which appeals even to a modern reader. Not that the grotesque elements are wanting. They are displayed here clearly in the waterleaders' pageant of *The Deluge,* where Noah's wife appears in her traditional guise of a scolding shrew.

Noe. Wife, come in! why standes thou here?
thou are ever froward, that dare I sweare.
Come in, on gods half! tyme yt were,
for feare lest that we drowne.
uxor Noe.[1] Yea, Sir, set vp your sayle
and rowe forth with evill heale[2]!
for, without any fayle,
I will not out of this towne.
But[3] I haue my gossips everichon,[4]
one foote further I will not gone

[1] Noah's wife. [2] health. [3] unless. [4] every one.

they shall not drowne, by St John,
and [1] I may save their lyfe.
they loved me full well, by christ;
but thou wilt let them in thy chist,[2]
els rowe forth, Noe, whether thou list,
and get thee a new wife.
Noe. Sem, sonne, loe, thy mother is wraw.[3]
for sooth such another I do not know.
Sem. Father, I shall fett [4] her in, I trow,
without any fayle.
Mother, my father after thee send,
And bydds the into yonder ship wend
loke vp and se the wynde,
for we be readye to sayle.
vxor Noe. Sonne, goe again to him and say:
I will not come therein to daye.
Noe. Come in wife, in 20 devills waye,
Or else stand there without. . . .
vxor Noe. That will I not for all your call,
but I haue my gossopes all.
Sem. In faith, mother, yet you shall,
whether you will or not. [*tunc ibit.*[5]
Noe. Welcome, wife, into this boate.
vxor Noe. And haue thou that for thy mote [6] !
[*Et dat alapam vita.*[7]
Noe. A! ha! mary, this is hote,[8]
it is good to be still.

Whatever jollification may appear in scenes such as this, it is, however, the emotion appearing in these Chester plays that calls for most attention. It is nowhere better expressed than in the play of *Abraham's Sacrifice,* performed by the Barbers and the Wax-chandlers. The portraits of Abraham and Isaac are well drawn, and there is a perfect charm in the childlike presentation of this heart-touching story.

Abraham. Make thee ready, my Derling,
for we must doe a lyttle thing.
this wood vpon thy back thou bring,
we must not long abyde. . . .

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[1] if. [2] chest, or Ark. [3] angry. [4] fetch.
[5] Here she is forced into the Ark. [6] speech or argument.
[7] She gives him a slap (*vita* probably = *victa,* 'being conquered').
[8] hot.

Isaak. Father, I am all readye
to doe your bydding mekelie,
to bear this wood full bowne[1] am I,
as you commaunde me.

Abraham. O Isaak, Isaak, my derling deere,
my blessing now I geve the[2] here.
take vp this fagot with good cheare,
and on thy backe yt bringe,
and fire with me I will take.

Isaake. Your bydding I will not forsake,
father, I will never slake
to fulfill your bydding.

[*Tunc Isaak accipiet lignum super tergum et ad montem pariter Ibunt.*[3]

Abraham. Now Isaake, sonne, goe we our waye
to yonder mountayne, if that we maye

Isaake. My dere father, I will assaye
to follow you full fayne.

Abraham. O! my hart will break in three,
to heare thy wordes I have pyttie.
as thou wilt, lord, so must yt be:
to thee I will be bayne.[4]
lay downe thy fagot, my owne sonne deere!

Isaak. All ready, father, loe yt is here.
but why mak you so heavie cheare?[5]
are you any thing adred[6]?
father, if it be your will,
wher is the beast that we shall kill?

Abraham. Ther is non, sonne, vpon this hill
that I see here in this steed.[7] . . .

Isaak. Father, tell me of this case,
why you your sword drawen hase,
and beare yt naked in this place;
thereof I have great wonder.

Abraham. Isaac, sonne, peace! I pray thee,
thou breakes my harte even in three.

Isaac. I praye you, father, leane[8] nothing from me,
but tell me what you thinke.

Abraham. O Isaac, Isaac, I must thee kill.

Isaac. Alas! father, is that your will,
your owne childe here for to spill,[9]
vpon this hilles brynke? . . .

---

[1] ready. [2] thee.
[3] Here Isaac takes up the wood on his back, and both go off to the hill.
[4] obedient. [5] Why are you so heavy of heart?
[6] afraid. [7] place. [8] keep. [9] destroy.

Abraham. O my sonne, I am sory
to doe to thie this great anye[1] :
Gods Comaundment do must I,
his works are ay full mylde.
Isaac. Wold God, my mother were here with me!
she wolde knele vpon her knee,
praying you, father, if it might be,
for to save my life.
Abraham. O Comelie Creature, but[2] I thee kill,
I greeve my God, and that full Ill:
I may not worke against his will
but ever obedyent be,
O Isaac, Sonne, to thee I saye:
God has Comaunded me this daye
sacrifice—this is no naye[3]—
to make of thy boddye.[4]
Isaac. Is it Gods will I shold be slaine?
Abraham. yea, sonne, it is not for to layne[5] ;
to his bydding I will be bayne,
ever to his pleasinge. . . .
Isaac. Mary! father, God forbydd
but you doe your offringe.
Father, at home your sonnes you shall finde
that you must love by course of kinde.[6]
be I once out of your mynde,
your sorrow may sone[7] cease,
But you must doe Gods bydding.
father, tell my mother for nothing.

It is easy to see here the emotional power, even if expressed in crude phraseology, which was later to give inspiration to more artistic and more cultured dramatists.

Clear marks of composite authorship are afforded in the so-called "Towneley" cycle, which probably belongs to the town of Wakefield. Some of the plays are evidently taken over from the York series, or belong to some common source; others are independent, but of small literary value; and a few (plays iii, xii, xiii, xiv, and xxi) are characterized by a humour freer and bolder than anything visible in the other mystery cycles. Indeed, in those five plays we have the first sure signs of the hand of a writer possessing independent thought and individual expression. The five

[1] annoy (=harm). [2] unless. [3] there is no denying.
[4] body. [5] to be denied. [6] nature. [7] soon.

plays deal with Noah, the Shepherds, the Adoration, and the last days of Christ. Of these unquestionably that which possesses most interest is the so-called *Secunda Pastorum* (Nos. xii and xiii are both shepherds' plays), in which occurs the delightful native pastoral of Mak and his companions. The shepherds are shown chatting "in rustic row"; Mak enters to them, and, when they lie down to sleep, he succeeds in stealing a lamb. His companions awake, and find their loss. Together they troop down to Mak's cottage and knock at the door. Mak lets them in, and they see a cradle (in which the sheep is wrapped up). The third shepherd wishes to see the supposed child:

Gyf me lefe[1] hym to kys and lyft vp the clowtt.[2]
what the dewill is this? he has a long snowte.
primus pastor. he is merkyd[3] amys. we wate ill abowte.
ijus pastor. Ill spon[4] weft, Iwys[5] ay commys foull owte.[6]
Ay, so!
he is lyke to oure shepe!
iijus pastor. how, gyb! may I pepe?
primus pastor. I trow, kynde[7] will crepe
where it may not go. . . .
Mak. Peasse[8] bid I: what! lett be youre fare;
I am he that hym gatt and yond woman hym bare.
primus pastor. What dewill shall he hatt[9]? Mak? lo god!
Makys ayre.[10]
ijus pastor. lett be all that. now god gyf hym care, I sagh.[11]
Vxor. A pratty child is he
As syttys on a woman's kne;
A dyllydowne, perde,
To gar[12] a man laghe.
iijus pastor. I know hym by the eere marke that is a good tokyn.
Mak. I tell you, surs, hark! hys noyse[13] was brokyn.
Sythen told me a clerk that he was forspokyn.[14] . . .
Vxor. he was takyn with an elfe,
I saw it myself.
when the clock stroke twelf
was he forshapyn.[15]
ijus pastor. ye two ar well feft sam in a stede.[16]

---

[1] leave. [2] cloth. [3] marked. [4] spun. [5] truly.
[6] out. [7] nature. [8] peace. [9] be called. [10] Mak's heir.
[11] say. [12] make. [13] nose. [14] bewitched. [15] misshaped.
[16] Literally, endowed together in one place, *i.e.*, both in the plot.

iijus pastor. Syn thay manteyn thare theft let do thaym to dede.[1]
Mak. If I trespas eft gyrd of my heede.[2]
with you will I be left.[3]
primus pastor. Syrs, do my reede.[4]
ffor this trespas,
we will nawther ban[5] ne flyte.[6]
ffyght nor chyte,[7]
Bot haue done as tyte,[8]
And cast hym in canvas.[9]

This scene, because of its vivacity and realism, has become well known, but it is typical of many other scenes in which a crude kind of native comedy may be seen struggling to birth. Thus in the most terrible scene of the *Crucifixion* humour is introduced in the persons of four torturers. They work away at the cross, and start hauling it to its place:

Tercius tortor. So, that is well, it will not brest,[10]
But let us se who dos the best
with any slegthe of hande.
iiijus tortor. Go we now vnto the othere ende;
ffelowse, fest[11] on fast youre hende,[12]
And pull well at this band.
primus tortor. I red,[13] felowse, by this wedyr,[14]
That we draw all ons togedir,[15]
And loke how it wyll fare.
ijus tortor. let now se and lefe[16] youre dyn!
And draw we ilka syn from syn[17];
ffor nothyng let vs spare.
iijus tortor. Nay, felowse, this is no gam[18]!
we will no longere draw all sam,[19]
So mekill[20] haue I asspyed.
iiijus tortor. No, for as haue[21] I blys!
Som can twyk,[22] who so it is,
Sekys easse on some kyn syde.[23]
primus tortor. It is better, as I hope,
On by his self[24] to draw this rope,

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[1] do them to death. [2] head. [3] I will agree with your judgment. [4] act according to my counsel. [5] curse. [6] quarrel. [7] chide. [8] quickly. [9] toss him in a blanket. [10] burst. [11] fasten. [12] hands. [13] counsel. [14] weather. [15] together. [16] leave. [17] sinew from sinew. [18] game. [19] together. [20] much. [21] may have. [22] pull slightly. [23] on some side or another. [24] each by himself.

And then may we se
who it is that ere while
All his felows can begyle,
Of his companye.
Secundus tortor. Sen [1] thou will so haue, here for me!
now draw I, as myght thou the [2]?
Tercius tortor. Thou drew right wele.[3]
haue here for me half a foyte [4]!
quartus tortor. wema,[5] man! I trow thou doyte!
Thou flyt [6] it neuer a dele [7];
Bot haue for me here that I may!
primus tortor. Well drawen, son, bi this day!
Thou gose well to thi warke!
Secundus tortor. yit efte,[8] whils thy hande is in,
pull therat with some kyn gyn.[9]
iijus tortor. yee, & bryng it to the marke.
quartus tortor. pull, pull!
primus tortor. haue now!
ijus tortor. let se!
iijus tortor. A ha!
iiijus tortor. yit a draght [10]!
primus tortor. Therto with all my maght.[11]
ijus tortor. A ha! hold still thore [12]!
iijus tortor. So, felowse! looke now belyfe,
which of you can best dryfe,
And I shall take the bore.[13]

The other stray examples of mysteries need not detain us much further, although the *Ludus Coventriæ,* if only for its peculiar character as an unattached cycle and for its fanciful theology, deserves close attention. This series of forty-two plays has nothing to do with the regular Coventry Corpus Christi cycle, of which all but a fragment has perished, and which was most probably performed at more than one town. Apart from these major series the most interesting relics we possess are the actors' parts for three little playlets of an exceedingly primitive type. These actors' parts were discovered at Shrewsbury in 1890 and show clearly how the Latin anthems at Christmas and Easter were gradually

[1] since. [2] thrive. [3] well. [4] foot. [5] alas!
[6] move. [7] bit. [8] yet once again.
[9] with some kind of cunning ('gin' means either 'engine'—tool, lever, etc.—or 'artifice').
[10] yet another pull. [11] might. [12] there.
[13] hole (with reference to the hole in which the Cross is to stand).

adorned with fragments of dialogue in the vernacular. The *Officium Pastorum* gives us the basis of the later shepherds' plays, the *Officium Resurrectionis* the elaboration of the *Quem Quæritis* trope, and the *Officium Peregrinorum* the first stage of development in the ever-popular story of Christ's reappearance before his disciples. The majority of the other extant mysteries and miracles have less intrinsic value. The Newcastle Shipwrights' play is in the ordinary tradition; the *Abraham and Isaac* probably belonging to Northampton is interesting for its association with the French *Mystère du Vieil Testament;* and the "Digby" plays of *The Conversion of St Paul, St Mary Magdalene,* and *The Massacre of the Innocents* show evidence of a capable authorship. None, however, deserves detailed mention here. Two points of historical importance might, on the other hand, be noted in the Norwich play of *The Fall* and in the *Croxton Sacrament.* In the second version of the former there are introduced the figures of Dolor, Myserye, and the Holy Ghost, showing that the original mystery tradition was widening itself to include characters not in the sacred text, and was approaching the allegorical types of the moralities. In the latter, which dates from the second half of the fifteenth century, there is a note that "ix may play yt at ease," a sign possibly that the original guild actors were giving way to professional players, who were touring the country and presenting the pieces originally associated with amateur performances.

What, it may be asked in conclusion, is to be our final judgment on this mystery tradition so far as it concerns the development of dramatic art? Obviously there are many defects in the plays. They are chaotic in construction, the cycles forbidding the more ordered expression of individual thoughts and feelings. Conservatism, moreover, rules these dramas. The stories and the types were already there before the authors when they sat down to write. Hardly any scope was offered to the dramatist who might have superabundant dramatic inventiveness. The stiltedness of the language affects us also; clearly the writers are fettered by the various rimes and measures in which the

dialogue is cast. On the other hand, we see many possibilities for future advance. The mysteries gave to the people of England a taste for theatrical shows; they prepared the ground for the Elizabethan drama of later date; they provided the basis for further development along artistic lines. There was little here that was artificial and imitative. In origin the English mysteries may have borrowed much from the French plays of a similar type, but fundamentally they breathed of English soil. The anachronisms permitted by the lax standards of medieval art, moreover, allowed a freshness and vitality of treatment which would have been impossible under different conditions. Cain becomes an English peasant of grasping and rapacious mood; the shepherds in the *Secunda Pastorum* are not the shepherds of Palestine, but the shepherds of an English countryside; Noah's wife is a "cursed shrew" of some provincial town. The serious scenes, too, have frequently this realistic flavour. The murderers who surround Christ in the Wakefield play of *The Crucifixion* are native types and owe nothing to their historical surroundings. It is the freshness, then, of the mystery plays which deserves our attention, for it was this freshness added to a sense of form borrowed from a study of classical art which gave to us the glories of the Shakespearian drama.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL DRAMA

The Morality Plays

THE exact steps in the advance from miracle play to morality are exceedingly difficult to trace, although a hint of the process is provided in the Norwich play, *The Fall,* noted in the last chapter. All we can say is that some century and a half after the miracles had first become an established form the morality play makes its definite appearance. These morality plays differ entirely from the other type. In the first place, they are all much longer than any of the component parts of a mystery cycle, and some are divided after the manner of the Senecan tragedies into acts and scenes. Nor were they written for precisely the same audience. Many were clearly penned for production in the halls of persons more aristocratic than those who witnessed the mysteries, and the majority, if not all, of them must have been performed by professional actors. The notes on the title-pages of *Impacyente pouerte* that "Foure men may well and easelye playe thys Interlude," and of *Welth and Helth* that "Foure may easely play this Playe" point almost certainly to the small band of strolling players. Here, too, we find for the first time clear indications of individual authorship. Wrapped as the moralities may be in medieval abstractions, with them the drama begins to move into the light of the modern age. On many of them renascent humanism has set its seal.

The moralities are all characterized by the use of abstractions and of allegorical characters as the *dramatis personæ.* At first sight this might appear to be a retrogression from the real, or supposedly real, figures of the mystery plays, but the retrogression is more apparent than actual. Constantly the allegory as such is breaking down, and contemporary traits are given to the Deadly Sins and

Everlasting Wisdoms in which these plays abound. Thus Evil Counsel in the play called *Johan the Euangelyst* is a portrait of the Tudor age. His words have nothing in them that would connect him with the title of the play.

> For sythe[1] I came fro Rochester
> I haue[2] spente all my wynnynge[3]
> By our lady I wyll no more goo to Couentry
> For there knaues set me on the pyllery[4]
> And threwe egges at my hede[5]
> So sore that my nose dyd blede
> Of whyte wyne galons thurty.

This is a roysterer of early days speaking, not an abstraction. The peculiar paradox, therefore, is that in apparently drawing drama away from realism to allegory the morality writers succeeded in linking it still closer with actual life. The comic scenes in these moralities have in them the germs of that humour which later supplied the authors of the interludes, from whom it was passed on to the comedy writers of Elizabethan times. The rough farce of the scene in Redford's *Wyt and Science* (*c.* 1541–8) in which Ignorancy gets Idleness to pronounce his name in syllables, the similar scene in *Respublica* where Avarice teaches Adulation the word 'reformation' by the same means, the introduction of broken Dutch in the figure of Hance Beerpot in *Welth and Helth,* all show quite clearly the potentialities inherent in this style. For tragedy too there lay great possibilities in this form of drama. The cardinal feature of nearly all the moralities was the pursuit of Everyman (Humanum Genus or Mankind) by evil forces and his rescue by Conscience or Wisdom. Not only are the abstractions rendered into contemporary types, but the thoughts and emotions of man are personified. It is not fanciful here to see the beginnings of that tragic soul-struggle which later became so marked a characteristic of the Shakespearian drama. Men were taught here the secret of progression of character and the delineation of conflicting passions. And to these features of the morality plays must be added the sense of construction and unity

[1] since. [2] The letters *u* and *v* at this period were often transposed. [3] winnings, earnings, or income. [4] pillory. [5] head.

of form previously referred to, which set them far apart from the chaotic heterogeneity of the mystery cycles.

The best known of all the moralities is *Everyman* (end of fifteenth century), which may have formed the original of, or itself may have been taken from, the corresponding Dutch play of *Elckerlijk*.[1] Superior though this drama be to the majority of these fifteenth- and sixteenth-century works, it is not untypical of a large class of similarly moral plays. In it God calls upon Death, who approaches Everyman. Fellowship, Kindred, Goods, and all worldly things forsake him; only Good Deeds consents to follow him over the passage of the grave. The verse of this drama is very poetic and marks it out as being one of the chief works of fifteenth-century literature. Along with *Everyman* may be taken a whole series of kindred moral plays. *Mankynd* presents the hero befriended by Mercy and attacked by the rascally company of Nought, New-gyse, and Nowadays. The scenes in which these vagabonds appear are genuinely comic, and the desires of the audience are well seen in a passage which precedes the entrance of Titivillus, the devil. New-gyse and Nowadays decide that this will be a good moment to take a gathering from the audience, and, turning to the spectators, they proffer the collecting-bag:

New-gyse. ȝe[2]! go þi[3] wey[4]! we xall[5] gaþer money on-to;
Ellys þer xall no man hym se.[6]
Now gostly to owur purpos, worschypfull souerence[7]!
We intende to gather mony, yf yt plesse yowur neclygence,[8]
For a man with a hede þat [is] of grett omnipotens.
Nowadays. Keep yowur tayll, in goodnes, I prey yow, goode broþer!
He ys a worschyp[f]ull man, sers, sauynge yowur reuerens;
He louyth no grotis, nor pens or to-pens.[9]
Gyf ws rede reyallys,[10] yf ȝe wyll se hys abhomynabull presens.
New-gyse. Not so! ȝe þat mow not pay þe ton, pay þe toþer![11]

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[1] See the edition of the latter by Professor H. Logeman (1892) for a discussion of the relationship of the two plays.

[2] Yea (ȝ = y). [3] thy (þ = th). [4] way. [5] shall.
[6] or else no man shall see him. [7] sovereigns. [8] your negligence.
[9] He doesn't love groats, or pence or twopenny pieces.
[10] Give us red royals (a coin).
[11] Not so! You that can't pay the one, pay the other!

In Henry Medwall's *goodly interlude of Nature* (end of fifteenth century) Man is addressed by Nature, while Bodily Lust, Sensuality, and Worldly Affection strive to draw him away from Reason. Moral in aim, too, is *Johan the Euangelyst,* where Evil Counsel and Idleness play the wicked parts. The contemporary features of the former have already been commented upon. *A Newe Interlude of Impacyente pouerte* (printed 1560) is of a similar cast. Envy, Collhassarde, and Mysrule play the vagabond crew, and are opposed by Peace and Pouerte. Here once more the realism of the presentation of the *dramatis personæ* attracts our notice. This realism is further increased in *An enterlude of Welth, and Helth, very mery and full of Pastyme* (early sixteenth century), in which Welth and Shrowdwyt are as full of vitality as any character in regular sixteenth-century farce. Dialect is here introduced by Hance Beerpot, and Ill Wyll in some scenes pretends he is Spanish and speaks a kind of mixed language with English and Spanish forms. In this play we are close to the comic interlude proper. *The Pride of Life* (early fifteenth century) is nearer to the mystery tradition with its characters Rex Vivus, Primus Miles Fortitudo, and Secundus Miles Sanitas, but in the Nuntius Mirth it draws close to the realism of the others. *Mind, Will and Understanding* has a slightly variant theme in the presentation of Anima with her three parts, Mind, Will, and Understanding, seduced by Lucifer and reconverted by Everlasting Wisdom. A struggle for the soul of Humanum Genus is once more to be found in *The Castell of Perseverance* (early fifteenth century), one of the earliest-known moralities. A Malus Angelus with the Seven Deadly Sins and a Bonus Angelus with the Six Divine Graces are the chief contending forces. Of slightly different features is the *propre newe Interlude of the Worlde and the Chylde, otherwyse called Mundus & Infans* (printed 1522) and in John Skelton's better-known *Magnyfycence, a goodly interlude, and a mery* (printed 1529–33). The latter is particularly interesting as showing the influence of humanistic thought upon this form of drama, the didactic aim being not so much moral as calculated to convey a

truth emphasized by many classic philosophers—the folly of expending money lavishly and trusting all to friends who may prove false. Even *Magnyfycence,* however, skilfully as that is written, is of minor importance when it is set beside Sir David Lyndsay's work in the Scottish dialect, *Ane Satyre of the thrie Estaits, in commendation of vertew and vitvperation of vyce* (*c.* 1540). This is a much more ambitious work than any of the pieces we have considered above. It takes the form of a disputation surrounding Rex Humanitas between Diligence and Wantonnes, which gives place to an "Interlude" introducing as its chief character "Pauper, the pure Man." Though the last named Lyndsay proceeds to satirize the corruptions of Church and of State, his bitter style showing clearly his own feelings and thoughts. Thus Pauper proceeds to give an account of his position:

Gude-man, will ȝe gif me ȝour Charitie,
And I sall declair ȝow the black veritie.
My father was ane auld man, and ane hoir,[1]
And was of age fourscoir of ȝeirs[2] and moir[3];
And Mald, my mother, was fourscoir and fyfteine;
And with my labour I did thame baith susteine,
Wee had ane Meir,[4] that caryit salt and coill;[5]
And everie ilk[6] ȝeir scho[7] brocht vs hame ane foill.[8]
Wee had thrie ky,[9] that was baith fat and fair,—
Nane tydier into the toun of Air.[10]
My father was sa waik[11] of blude and bane,[12]
That he deit[13]; quhairfoir my mother maid great maine.[14]
Then scho deit, within ane day or two;
And thair began my povertie and wo.
Our gude gray Meir was baittand[15] on the feild;
And our Lands laird tuik hir for his hyreild.[16]
The Vickar tuik the best Cow be[17] the head,
Incontinent, quhen[18] my father was deid;

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[1] hoar (= white). [2] years. [3] more. [4] mare.
[5] which carried salt and coal. [6] each. [7] she. [8] foal.
[9] kine. [10] Ayr. [11] weak. [12] bone. [13] died.
[14] wherefore my mother made great lament (moan).
[15] battened.
[16] took her for his rent or heriot (by which a lord claims the best animal on the death of a tenant). [17] by. [18] when.

And, quhen the Vickar hard tel how that my mother
Was dead, free-hand he tuke to him ane vther.[1]
Then Meg, my wife, did murne, both evin & morow,
Till, at the last, scho deit for verie sorow.
And, quhen the Vickar hard tell my wyfe was dead,
The thrid Cow he cleikit be the head.[2]
Thair vmest clayis,[3] that was of rapploch[4] gray,
The Vickar gart[5] his Clark bare them away.
Quhen all was gaine, I micht mak na debeat,[6]
Bot, with my bairns, past for till beg my meat.[7]
Now haue I tald 3ow the blak veritie,
How I am brocht into this miserie.

Diligence, to whom he tells this tale, is surprised and questions him:

How did 3e person[8]? Was he not thy gude freind?

to which Pauper at once makes reply:

The devil stick him! He curst me for my teind,[9]
And halds me 3it[10] vnder that same proces,
That gart me want the Sacrament at Pasche.[11]
In gude faith, sir, thocht he wald cut my throt,
I haue na geir[12] except ane Inglis grot,[13]
Quhilk I purpois to gif ane man of law.[14]

The answer of Diligence is straight and to the point:

Thou art the daftest fuill[15] that ever I saw.
Trows thou, man, be the law to get remeid
Of men of kirk?[16] Na, nocht till thou be deid.[17]

Lyndsay's satire, with its biting realistic touches, is far in advance of any of the English moralities.

Very soon the morality as such passed into the service of other parties than that of the moral teachers. Already we can trace a political element in Lyndsay's work, and this is intensified in *Respublica* (1553), a well-written drama

[1] immediately he took another. [2] caught by the head.
[3] last clothes. [4] a kind of tweed. [5] ordered, caused.
[6] I could make no reply (do nothing).
[7] went away to beg for food. [8] parson.
[9] He excommunicated me for my tithes (*i. e.*, for not paying them).
[10] holds me yet. [11] which makes me go without Communion at Easter.
[12] property. [13] English groat.
[14] which I intend to give a lawyer. [15] maddest fool.
[16] Do you expect to get remedy from the clergy by means of the law?
[17] No, not till you're dead.

directed against the reformers. The scenes of the People here are excellently conducted. So too in *Wyt and Science* (1541–8) we find the morality being used in the cause of humanism against the forces of Ignorancy and Idleness, who both appear among the *dramatis personæ*. In every way during the sixteenth century the scope of this form was being widened, so that it merged readily into the interlude proper.

One need devote no special comment to the fact that any account of the morality plays or of the mystery plays must necessarily be disproportioned. Many of the dramas written during those centuries must have perished irretrievably, although there is always hope that new examples will be discovered. It was only in 1906 that, in an Irish country mansion, three important moralities, otherwise unknown, suddenly came to light. Some fragments of a play called *The Cruel Debtor* (*c.* 1566), by one Wager, were unearthed recently in the British Museum, and in 1923 these were added to by the chance discovery of another leaf of the play.[1] Moreover, one of the most important links in the development of the drama, the *godely interlude of Fulgens Cenatoure of Rome* [*and*] *Lucres his doughter,* turned up unexpectedly at the Mostyn sale of 1919. It may well be understood, therefore, that our knowledge of the drama of this period rests only upon a few scattered items of evidence which time has carelessly handed down to us. From what remains we can but hazard a few generalizations which may come more or less close to the truth. The morality play marks no retrogressive movement. In it there are suggested many possibilities of future development both in tragedy and in comedy; many of the characters presented, even though their names may be allegorical, have a vitality lacking in later dramas intended to be realistic. The profound devotion of the authors gave to their plays a deep seriousness of tone, and their inherent sense of humour provided comic scenes of a truly excellent cast. In several particular ways, too, these authors of the moralities handed on

[1] See Malone Society *Collections,* i, 4 and 5, and ii, 2.

traditions later to be transformed in the Elizabethan period. Of these traditions, that of the Vice may be taken as typical. The Vice has already been found in the mystery plays; he becomes an established figure in the morality. His sense of fun, his rascality, his quips, and his jests made him a stock figure, and it is no mere fancy that finds him under the guise of Feste and Touchstone at the close of the sixteenth century.

(ii) From Symbolism to Realism. The Interludes and Court Plays

In passing from the morality proper to the interlude, the same warning concerning the scantiness of the texts preserved must once more be given. It is even more certain here that countless plays have perished. A glance at Professor Feuillerat's volumes of records from the Revels' accounts will display clearly the loss of these early dramas. Of many plays mentioned there only an infinitesimal portion has come down to us. Again, therefore, any account of this dramatic development must be regarded as tentative rather than final in character.

The word 'interlude' seems to have had, and still to have, no very definite meaning. It may imply simply a 'play' in the sense that it is a *ludus* carried on between (*inter*) several characters;[1] but the use of the term in Lyndsay's *Ane Satyre of the thrie Estaits* would seem to show that the alternative significance, that of a play in the midst of other festivities or business, was in the minds of many early writers. Unless we confine the term strictly to those plays of a realistic sort (as, for example, Heywood's) we can find no strict line of demarcation between it and the term 'morality.' As has been noted, many of the moralities proper were styled by their printers or authors 'interludes,' and even the characteristics of the two forms merge into one another. Thus *Hyckescorner* (early sixteenth century) is in the main a morality, yet shows a clear development toward the greater elaboration of purely comic elements; so

[1] See E. K. Chambers, *The Mediæval Stage*, ii, 183.

too do *Thēterlude of Youth* (reign of Mary), *A new Enterlude called Thersytes* (*c.* 1537), and John Rastell's *A new Interlude and a mery of the nature of the .iiii. elements.*

It is with Rastell and those who were associated with him—Medwall, Sir Thomas More, and John Heywood—that we begin clearly to move into a new realm.[1] Here, for the first time, we meet with the introduction of purely secular characteristics. The group of plays concerned in this new movement includes Medwall's newly discovered *Fulgens and Lucres* and the kindred *Calisto and Melebea* (printed by Rastell) translated by an anonymous writer from an Italian version of the Spanish *Celestina* (1492). Besides these there are Heywood's *A dialogue concerning witty and witless, A play of loue* (printed 1534), and *The Play of the wether* (printed 1533), with the trilogy of interludes attributed to Heywood—*The playe called the foure P.P.* (printed 1543–7), *A mery Play betwene the pardoner and the frere, the curate and neybour Pratte* (*c.* 1513–21; printed 1533), and *A mery play Betwene Johan Johan the husbande, Tyb his wyfe & syr Ihān the preest* (printed 1533). To the above may also be added *Of Gentylnes and Nobylyte. A dyaloge . . . compilid in maner of an enterlude* (printed by Rastell), attributed, on what appears to be sure evidence, to Rastell by Dr. A. W. Reed. Three clearly defined strata are revealed in this group of plays: a primitive *débat* kind of drama, exemplified in Heywood's three known plays; a coarse but hearty farce form shown in *The foure P.P.* and the two accompanying dramas; and a romantic comedy form displayed most notably in *Fulgens and Lucres.* The first is probably of least importance. *A play of loue* is somewhat confusing and artlessly arranged, and rises hardly at all above the levels of a mere debate. *A dialogue concerning witty and witless* has more of the *vis comica* in it, but does not present to us anything that calls for detailed mention. In *The Play of the wether,* on the other hand, we

[1] The various papers contributed to *The Library* by Dr. A. W. Reed, as well as his study on *The Beginnings of the English Secular and Romantic Drama* (Shakespeare Association), have thrown much new light on the development of the drama in the hands of this group.

have a truly humorous little farce, wherein Jupiter appoints Mery-Reporte (the representative of the Vice) to summon before him all who might have complaints to make concerning the weather. A Gentylman comes to demand it "Drye and not mysty, the wynde calme and styll," a Merchant to pray for it to be "Stormy, nor mysty, the wynde mesurable,[1]" a Ranger to ask for "good rage of blustryng and blowynge," a Water Myller to beg for rain. At this point a Wynde Myller enters, and a quarrel breaks out between the two, to be stilled only when a Gentylwoman comes to demand "wether close and temperate." A Launder wishes for sun, and a Boy for "plente of snow to make my snow-ballys." In the face of all these suits what can Jupiter do but give variety of weather at his own good will? Obviously here we are moving away from the world of pure abstractions and of didacticism; modern farce and comedy are in the making. A still further advance is made in the trilogy of farces generally attributed to Heywood, but lately associated in part at least with the better-known name of Sir Thomas More.[2] *The pardoner and the frere* carries us at once into the real surroundings of sixteenth-century life. This is as realistic as any comedy of Ben Jonson's, and only wants the liberation of more action to become an excellent comedy-farce. *Johan Johan* is equally good. The character of the husband is excellently drawn, and the scene where he sits burning his fingers over the fire while Syr Ihān and his wife consume the pie is excellently managed. For dialogue *The foure P.P.* is even finer. A Palmer, a Pardoner, a Potycary and a Pedler meet together and start telling stories. It is arranged that the one who tells the greatest lie will win a wager. The Pardoner tells of marvellous cures he has wrought, the Poticary of wonderful medicines. Then comes a lengthy tale by the Pardoner of how he sought a lady friend in the courts of Hades; Satan was willing to let her go on consideration that he should pardon all the women he could upon earth, women being such shrews in Hell that the place was becoming perfectly impossible. At this the

[1] moderate. [2] See the papers of Dr. A. W. Reed noted above.

Palmer interrupts to say that that is most peculiar, since in the whole of his varied experience he never once found a woman out of patience. The laurels promptly go to him for his lie.

In *Calisto and Melebea* and in *Fulgens and Lucres* we are taken to another realm, the realm of romance. Here, unquestionably, is to be seen the basis on which was reared later the pure romantic comedy of Greene and Lyly and Shakespeare. In both we find the mixture of fun and rich sentiment which later was glorified in *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream;* and in the latter may be traced the first known appearance of a comic underplot such as we find in the Shakespearian drama.

The influence of foreign drama, and of foreign literature generally, is evident in these plays, and by this time various attempts were being made to translate or to imitate works by the classic writers or by the new bands of humanists. Thus, *A new Enterlude for Chyldren to playe, named Jacke Jugeler, both wytte, and very playsent* shows the influence of Plautus' *Amphitruo; Necromantia* is *A dialog of the poet Lucyan . . . now lately translated;* J. Palsgrave's *The Comedye of Acolastus* (printed 1540) is a rendering "into our englysshe tongue" from the *Acolastus* (1530) of Wilhelm de Volder; and Henry Cheke's *Freewyl* (printed *c.* 1560) follows the *Tragedia del libero Arbitrio* (1546) of Francesco Nigri de Bassano. The English humanists, too, were trying their hands at dramas, sometimes in Latin, sometimes in English, generally with a religious colouring, based on classical models. Nicholas Grimald produced a *Christus redivivus. Comœdia tragica, sacra et nova* (1543) and an *Archipropheta* (1547), John Bale a series of religious plays most of which are now non-extant. Of those which have been preserved by the latter writer *A Tragedye or enterlude manyfestyng the Chefe promyses of God vnto Man* (written 1538, printed 1577), *A Brefe Comedy or Enterlude of Johan Baptystes* (written 1538, printed *c.* 1577), and *A Comedy concernynge thre lawes* (written 1538, printed *c.* 1580) are relics of the old mystery tradition adapted to later conditions, but *Kynge Johan* (written before 1548) presents

a novel development. Here the abstractions loved by the morality writers are inextricably intermingled with real figures of John's reign, the realism of the presentation becoming apparent in countless scenes and passages. Interesting as this and the kindred movements are, however, we cannot attribute much influence on the growth of English secular drama to these religious humanists, with their somewhat dull and distinctly unpopular plays.

The impression of humanism, on the other hand, was making itself felt on the primitive drama of the sixteenth century, and it is out of this humanistic movement that the first true tragedy and comedy spring.

(iii) Early Tragi-comedies

The exact point at which the true comedy and the true tragedy come into being, the precise movement from Heywood and the various morality writers to the playwrights who immediately preceded Marlowe, Greene, and Lyly, is extraordinarily difficult to trace, particularly when we know that many of the mid-sixteenth-century works have not come down to us. From the extant records, however, we may make some more or less definite deductions concerning the development of drama in these years. It is necessary at the outset to distinguish at least four types of play which arose, independently, out of the more primitive efforts of the earlier years. Regular comedy and regular tragedy are, naturally, two of these types, but alongside of them we must note the works of a tragi-comic sort and the chronicle histories.

In view of its retention of more primitive features it may be well to begin with the third type. The plays of this kind are of varying character, extending from the very primitive *New cõmodye in englysh in maner Of an enterlude ryght elygant & full of craft of rethoryk wherein is shewd & dyscrybyd as well the bewte & good propertes of women as theyr vycys & euyll cõdiciõs* (printed without a date; usually called *Calisto and Melebea*) to George Whetstone's *Right Excellent and famous Historye, of Promos and Cassandra*

(printed 1578). In addition to these two tragi-comedies, we possess of this group Henry Medwall's recently discovered and already mentioned *Fulgens and Lucres,* John Pikeryng's *A Newe Enterlude of Vice Conteyninge, the Historye of Horestes* (printed 1567), Thomas Preston's *A lamentable Tragedie, mixed full of plesant mirth, containing the life of Cambises King of Percia* (entered in the Stationers' Register 1569–70), Richard Edwards' *The excellent Comedie of two the moste faithfullest Freends, Damon and Pithias* (acted probably in 1564), and R. B.'s *A new Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia* (entered in the Stationers' Register 1567–8). All of these are bound together by certain ties. Every one mixes "lamentable Tragedie" with "pleasant mirth" or presents an atmosphere which may be called neither comic nor tragic. In this they are thoroughly romantic in tendency, defying the rigid canon of the neo-classicists concerning the various watertight divisions of literary form. Most are romantic also in betraying the presence of native features taken from the morality plays. The old Vice appears as Haphazard in *Apius and Virginia* and as Ambidexter in *Cambises.* On the other hand, all are taken either from classical legend or from works by foreign writers of the Renascence. *Calisto and Melebea* is an adaptation of the Spanish *Celestina; Fulgens and Lucres* is taken from Bonaccorso da Pistoja's *De Vera Nobilitate;* the rest have some foundation on story or history of ancient days. All, moreover, show the influence both of Seneca and of Terence. The employment of types taken from the comedies of one and the στιχομυθία (short one-lined dialogue) taken from the tragedies of the other prove the authors' indebtedness to classical example.

In view of the fact that not one of these plays has any very great literary value it is perhaps sufficient here to outline the features of one or two and take these as typical of the whole group. *Apius and Virginia* is the most "tragicall" and the most primitive of all. We are presented here with a little *Measure for Measure* picture. Virginia, the daughter of Virginius, fires the heart of the judge Apius. With the aid of Mansipulus and Haphazard he contrives

to pass a decree that Virginia shall be given to him, but she prefers death at her father's hands to shame. The little play is written throughout in jogging metre, dull enough in the serious and 'moral' parts, but not unsuitable for comic dialogue. On Haphazard's entry the author shows wherein lies his predilection. The language suddenly takes on a fresh turn and flashes with primitive vivacity:

> Very well sir, very well sir, it shalbe doone,
> As fast as ever I can prepare,
> Who dippes with the Diuel, he had neede haue a long spoone,
> Or els full smale will be his fare:
> Yet a proper Gentileman I am of truthe
> Yea that may yee see by my long side goune,
> Yea, but what am I, a Scholer, or a scholemaister, or els som youth.
> A Lawier, a studient or els a countrie cloune
> A Brumman, a Baskit maker, or a Baker of Pies,
> A flesh or a Fishmonger, or a sower of lies:
> A Louse or a louser a Leeke or a Larke:
> A Dreamer a Drommell, a fire or a sparke:
> A Caitife, a Cutthrote, a creper in corners,
> A herbraine, a hangman, or a grafter of horners . . .
> But yet Haphazard, be of good cheere,
> Goe play and repast thee man, be mery to yeere:
> Though vittaile be dainty and hard for to get.
> Yet perhaps a number will die of the swet,
> Though it be in hazard, yet happely I may,
> Though mony be lacking, yet one day go gay.

There is something of an Autolycan spirit in the last lines. Nevertheless, while the author's heart is in this character the morality tradition keeps him true to a moral aim; Justice, Reward, and Memorie enter as visualized abstract forms at the close of the play, and Haphazard goes gaily to his doom:

> Must I needes hange, by the gods it doth spight me,
> To thinke how crabbedly this silke lase will bite me:
> Then come cosin cutpurs, come runne haste and folow me,
> Haphazard, must hange, come folow the lyuerie.

Calisto and Melebea is equally moral, the ending of the Spanish *Celestina* having been changed, but displays again

the author's love of less serious things. The story, told in seven-line stanzas, tells how Calisto is enamoured of Melebea; he confides in his servant Sempronio, who arranges to see the bawd Celestina. The last mentioned argues with Melebea, who is about to comply, when her father, Danio, enters to narrate a dream he has had. In horror Melebea confesses her evil thought, and the play ends with exhortations to virtue. The best parts are not the 'moral' portions, but the conversations of Celestina and Melebea. The former is a kind of prototype of Juliet's nurse. She can tell a story lengthily and with evident gusto:

> Now the blessyng that our lady gaue her sone
> That same blessyng I gyue now to you all . . .
> Sempronio for me about doth inquere
> And it was told me I shuld haue found hym here
> I am sure he wyll come hyther anone
> But the whylyst I shall tell you a prety game
> I haue a wench of Sempronios a prety one
> That soiornyth with me Elecea is her name
> But the last day we were both ny a stark shame
> For . . . she lovyth one Cryto better or as well
> Thys Cryto and Elicea sat drynkyng
> In my hous and I also makyng mery
> And as the deuyll wold farr from our thynkyng
> Sempronio almost cam on vs sodenly
> But then wrought I my craft of bawdery
> I had Cryto go vp and make hym self rome
> To hyde hym in my chamber among the brome
> Then made I Elicea syt doun a sowyng
> And I wyth my rok began for to spyn
> As who seyth of sempronio we had no knowyng
> He knokkyd at the dore and I lete hym in
> And for a countenaunce I did begyn
> To catch hym in myne armys and seyd see see
> Who kyssyth me Elicea and wyll not kys the
> Elicea for a countenaunce made her greuyd
> And wold not speke but styll dyd sowe
> Why speke ye not quod sempronio be ye meuyd
> Haue I not a cause quod she no quod he I trow
> A traytour quod she full well dost thou know
> Where hast thou ben these .iii. days fro me
> That the impostume and euyll deth take the
> Pease myne Elicea quod he why say ye thus
> Alas why put you your self in this wo

The hote fyre of loue so brennyth betwene vs
That my hart is wyth yours where euer I go
And for .iii. days absens to say to me so
In fayth me thynkyth ye be to blame
But how hark well for here begynnyth the game
Cryto in my chamber aboue that was hyddyn
I thynk lay not easyly and began to romble
Sempronio hard that and askyd who was within
Aboue in the chamber that so dyd Jomble
who quod she a louer of myne may hap ye stomble
Quod he on the trewth as many one doth
Go vp quod she and loke whether it be soth
Well quod he I go nay thought I not so
I sayd com sempronio let this foole alone
For of thy long absens she is in such wo
And half besyde her self and her wyt ny gone
Well quod he aboue yet there is one
Wylt thou know quod I ye quod he I the requere
It is a wench quod I sent me by a frere. . . .
Then he laught ye quod I no mo wordes of this
For this tyme to long we spend here amys.

Taken though Celestina may be from a Spanish source, we see here the raciness and the vigour of the English author. Melebea, too, is well drawn. Her first disgust at Celestina and then her half-playful acceptation of the latter's arguments show some skill in management of character.

In *Damon and Pithias* we approach something more elaborate. The precise 'moral' here has disappeared into the background, and we are presented with a pleasant little romantic story wherein Damon and Pithias with their faithful but outspoken servant Stephano arrive at Syracuse. Damon unwittingly allows himself to give cause for suspicion to Carisophus, a parasite and informer, and is accordingly condemned to death. On his begging leave of the monarch Dionysius to return to Greece, the latter consents, if Pithias will stand his pledge. On the day appointed, Damon not appearing, Pithias is about to be slain when Damon rushes in; the King is so affected that he takes them both into his Court. The story is added to by the pleasant humours of the kind-hearted but self-seeking philosopher Aristippus, by the pranks of the merry serving-boys Jacke and Wyll, and by the country manners

of Grime the colyer. There is a sparkle in this piece that shows Master Edwards to have been the forerunner of Lyly in more ways than one.

Fulgens and Lucres may be taken as the last typical example of this series. The Induction to this piece, with the two boy-figures, at the very start claims our attention, and the story itself is one that arouses our interest. The maiden Lucrece (or Lucres) is confronted with two lovers, Publius Cornelius, a gallant and an aristocrat, and Gayus Flaminius, lower born but of virtuous mind. The plot of the play concerns the wooing of Lucrece by these two, with her final decision to give her hand to the second. In this and in the former play we reach a stage intermediate between the morality or the moral-drama of the *Apius and Virginia* type and the full, completely formed tragedy and comedy of the University Wits. Already in *Damon and Pithias* we find wit and conceited fun as well as interesting characterization; in *Fulgens and Lucres,* as in *Promos and Cassandra,* we discover the introduction of romantic love. The real service of the authors of these plays, however, to the development of the drama lies in the driving away of the extraneous 'moral' and the consequent disappearance of abstract types and characters.

(iv) The Development of True Comedy

There can be no question but that these plays proved immensely popular; they may have offended the severer classicists such as Sidney, but they were nevertheless of the dramatic type favoured and demanded by the masses of English people. Their popularity extended from the Court of Elizabeth to the meanest of the Queen's subjects. The humanists, on the other hand, were not prepared to give up the struggle without an attempt to show their contemporaries what ought to be liked, and from their efforts came the first true English comedy and the first true English tragedy. Of the former type of drama two works have attained to a well-merited fame, the comedy by "Mr S." described as *A Ryght Pithy, Pleasaunt and merie*

Comedie: Intytuled Gammer gurtons Nedle (*c.* 1550–3; printed 1575) and Nicholas Udall's *Roister Doister* (*c.* 1553–4; printed 1566). While, in point of date, *Gammer Gurton's Needle* takes priority, it must be noted that this was a University play and consequently somewhat out of the regular movement in dramatic form; Udall's play remains the first complete English comedy designed for public performance in London.

In this drama we may clearly trace the impression of two forces—that of the comic interlude and that of Terence. Already the works of the Latin playwright had crept into an English dress; they were being read in the original by the humanists and studied in translation by those whose Latinity was too weak to permit them to gain the full flavour of the original. In general, we may say that the influence of Terence tended in two directions. From his plays the new dramatists learned how to work out a full plot. *Roister Doister* is no mere actionless farce or scanty debate, but a comedy full of incident and of adventure, well ordered and well planned. Not only in form, however, did Terence influence the rising English drama. In depiction of character too he taught men many intimate secrets. The witty lovers, the testy old fathers, the intriguing servants of sixteenth-century comedy all take their rise directly from his example. Roister Doister, the hero of this particular play, is after all only a transformed replica of the bombastic *miles gloriosus* of Roman times. A mere imitation of Terence, on the other hand, might well have led toward nothing but dullness and insipidity, and happily the English playwrights of the sixteenth century had their own native dramatic tradition on which to fall back. Comparing Udall's work with any of the plays of Shakespeare, we may consider it crude and uninteresting; yet the *vis comica* is there in however disguised a form. There is a freshness in the dialogue which shows that the author had heard or studied the rough yet bright and interesting conversations of the earlier interludes. There is a natural raciness in the work which is independent of classical imitation. The morality tradition,

also, had taught Udall something. If Roister Doister himself is a representative of the classic *miles gloriosus,* Matthew Merygreeke is simply the old Vice of native English tradition given an English name and attendant, not on a devil, but on a swaggering braggart.

Gammer Gurton's Needle displays in the main the same features with the addition of even more realistic touches. The story of the play is of the slightest, all hinging upon the loss of a needle and on the consequent intrigues and jealousies, yet the play has an enduring charm. The rustic setting, the rural types speaking many of them in country dialect, and the naturalistic dialogue all show us that this "Mr. S.," the author of the play, has not forgotten to look at life as well as at Terence. Here, we may say, the modern period of comedy has well begun.

It was not, however, only Terence who served as a model for the English playwrights in their search for form. The Renascence had produced in Italy two schools of drama, the *commedia erudita* and the *commedia dell'arte,* both based theoretically on classic example. Unquestionably the latter influenced English comedy both in the sixteenth and in the seventeenth centuries; and the former provided at least some suggestions to the early writers. For the introduction of this *commedia erudita* we must look to George Gascoigne, an author notable for his inventive powers rather than for any great literary capability. The Italian comedy of intrigue first made its appearance in *Supposes* (Gray's Inn, 1566), an adaptation of Ariosto's *I Suppositi,* a rendering of particular importance not only for its subject-matter, but also for its medium. It is the first prose comedy in English. This question of medium is one of particular significance. In medieval days all the dramas were penned in some one or other stanza-form; the interludes and the moralities were all rimed. The movement to blank verse marked an endeavour to secure a style that should be more realistic and consequently more fitting for the exposition of ordinary comic characters and episodes, while the final step was taken by Gascoigne when he discarded altogether the fettering restrictions of metrical

form. Most of the romantic dramatists of a later date retained the verse form for the greater portion of their plays, as expressing more fully their desires, but almost always that verse was intermingled with prose of a more realistic kind. Akin to this play of *Supposes,* but in verse, may be noted the anonymous *Bugbears* (extant in manuscript), an adaptation of A. F. Grazzini's *La Spiritata*—another attempt to popularize the Italian comedy in England. These two dramas, to judge from the titles of other plays preserved in the Revels Accounts, were merely two out of a large number of similar translations or adaptations from the Italian.

(v) Senecan Tragedies and Chronicle History Plays

In comedy there is not such a direct break between the classic and romantic theories as there is in tragedy. After all, these versions or imitations from the works of Terence or of Italian writers could easily be appreciated by classicist and romanticist alike. The neo-classical writers forbade the intermixture of comedy and tragedy, it is true; but the public could fully appreciate the spirit of a purely mirthful play. Both, moreover, realized that, after all, the basis of true comedy lies in nature; the realistic touches in the first two English comic dramas amply prove this. In the realm of tragedy it was far otherwise. Here we find a distinct cleavage, for the neo-classicists demanded dignified rhetoric rather than free expression of emotion, narration rather than the display of action, static qualities rather than movement. The popular audiences were wholly on the side of lyricism, liberty, and action. They could discern no justification for the set of rules instituted by the severer among the critics. We discover, therefore, a complete break between the tragi-comedies written presumably for the more popular audiences and the neo-classical tragedies written for the spectators of a more humanistic type. From the very first there could be no doubt that the popular opinion was to win in the end. Not

only do the neo-classical tragedies gradually disappear, but they themselves begin to take on elements borrowed from the popular drama.

The first tragedy of this type, indeed the first complete tragedy in English, is that of *Ferrex and Porrex*, better known as *Gorboduc*, the work of Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, acted in January 1562, and this effort was followed by Thomas Hughes' *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (Gray's Inn, 1588), Robert Wilmot's *Tragedie of Tancred and Gismund* (Inner Temple, 1567–8; known also as *Gismond of Salerne*), and George Gascoigne's *Jocasta* (Gray's Inn, 1566). The first three of these plays have similar characteristics. While all betray clearly their indebtedness to Seneca in style and in treatment of theme, it is noticeable that each one deals with what is virtually a "romantic" subject. The story of *Gorboduc* is taken from Geoffrey of Monmouth, as is that of *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, while the plot of *Tancred and Gismund*, centring round a fatal love passion, is derived from Boccaccio's *Decamerone*. These facts are significant; apparently not even the most pronounced of the humanists dared altogether to depart from the native tradition.

Viewed in comparison with the tragedies of Shakespeare, *Gorboduc*, first of the series, seems dull, stilted, and unimpassioned, with obvious borrowings from Seneca's plays. Yet we find not only that the authors preserved a certain liberty, but that they had a moderate share of artistic talent. They deliberately banished the old chorus, and substituted for it allegorical dumb shows, taken apparently from Italian example, showing in this their consciousness of the demands of a newer age. In style, too, crude as their effort is, they displayed some skill and even strength in the management of their blank-verse lines. They had mastered, that is to say, the basis of form; all that was required for the fuller development of the drama was the introduction of some greater and higher beauty of rhythm.

The Misfortunes of Arthur, based in style and treatment on Seneca's *Thyestes*, calls for little attention save in regard to the neo-classical ordering of a thoroughly romantic

theme. *Tancred and Gismund,* on the other hand, deserves notice for its thoroughly passionate plot, in which a lover visits his mistress by means of an underground cavern, eventually meeting his death at the hands of her father. Horror is introduced here at the close of the play when the maiden is presented with her lover's heart in a cup of gold. In style this tragedy marks no advance. The chill monotony of the choral verses and the insipidity of the στιχομυθία make the work but dull reading. The romantic playwrights had yet to teach the classicists that nothing truly dramatic could come from lines such as the following:

Gismund. Oh syr these teares love challengeth as due.
Tancred. But reason sayth that it no whitt avayle
Gismund. Yet can I not my passions so subdue
Tancred. Your fond affections ought not to prevaile
Gismund. Who can but plaint the losse of such a one
Tancred. Of mortall thinges no losse shuld seme so strange
Gismund. Such gemme was he as erst was never none.[1]

At the same time, while we smile at the puerilities of verses such as these, we must remember that this neo-classic author not only taught the romantic poets how to form an ordered whole of a theme of passion, but passed on the rough basis of the Senecan form for Shakespeare's use in his early career. *Jocasta* is even duller and more monotonous than *Tancred and Gismund;* but the play has a decided value in the fact that it is an adaptation of an Italian original, Lodovico Dolce's *Giocasta,* even although the title-page declares it to be a translation from Euripides.

The Senecan style was destined to play a large part in the history of later tragic effort. Many writers strove to reproduce as faithfully as possible the rigidity of the classic stage, with chorus and all complete, as Kyd did in his *Cornelia* (1593; printed 1594); others, such as the author of *The Lamentable Tragedie of Locrine* (*c.* 1591; printed 1595), attempted to follow the lead of Sackville and Norton in adapting romantic material to classic treatment; still others, such as Kyd in *The Spanish Tragedy,* boldly fused

[1] The text is taken from the manuscript version entitled *Gismond of Salerne.*

Senecan and romantic methods together, introducing a new and more forceful type of drama. While the neo-classic style never flourished in England, we must bear in mind that it was the neo-classicists who taught the playwrights of the age form and dignity of expression.

One other main dramatic development of these transitional years has been mentioned—the elaboration of the historical play. Already we have seen how Bale in *Kynge Johan* was making use, however unhistorically, of an historical monarch in order to enforce a moral or religious precept; his example must have been followed by others, until writers arose daring enough to pen plays on English history for no acknowledged didactic aim. It is perfectly apparent that this movement was almost entirely on the popular side. There might be opportunity here for the introduction of some of the external features of the Senecan drama, but the unities of time and place had to be abandoned, and the subject-matter allowed, nay demanded, an amount of bustle and action far removed from the static calm beloved by the neo-classicists. Of these historical plays many must have been lost. Barely a dozen are extant, although from contemporary records we know that the type was popular. All of these, it may be observed, were written for the public stages, not for Court production or for performance at the Inns or the Temple. Many of the chronicle histories are well known because of their relationship to Shakespeare's work; *The Troublesome Raigne of Iohn King of England* (*c.* 1590; printed 1591), *The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster* (*c.* 1592; printed 1594), *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke* (*c.* 1592; printed 1595), *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third* (*c.* 1590–4; printed 1594), *The Famous Victories of Henry the fifth* (*c.* 1588; printed 1598), and *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* (*c.* 1594; printed 1605) are each the basis of one of Shakespeare's plays. To these might be added *The Raigne of King Edward the third* (*c.* 1595; printed 1596) and *The Famous Historye of the life and death of Captaine Thomas Stukeley* (1596; printed 1605).

Most of these plays are weak in construction and in characterization, but in nearly every one there is the presence of some marked poetical features or dramatic touches. They show the establishment upon the English stage of a type of drama in which the morality tradition, the Senecan model, and the interlude have all played their parts. They show the love of action and romantic incident, the passion for freedom of expression and for poetic dialogue, which is always to be associated with the rise and development of the Elizabethan drama.

A backward glance at the growth of dramatic form as briefly described in this section reveals certain clearly traceable tendencies. We note first the elaboration of realism in comedy and in tragedy and the consequent casting off of the personified characters of the morality plays. On the other hand, there is the attempt to secure decorum and dignity on the part of the neo-classicists which makes certain dramas of this time, if not unreal, at least artificial in diction and in characterization. This struggle between the classicists and the dramatists holding to the native tradition colours the whole work of the period, and corresponds to two types of dramatic performance. The classical tragedies and comedies are nearly all confined to the Inns of Court or to the Universities; the more romantic plays are practically all associated with the popular stages. For long the humanists struggled; even Ben Jonson in the seventeenth century fondly hoped to oust the *Hamlets* and *Othellos* from the stage with his *Sejanus* and *Catiline*. The age, however, obviously wished for no trammels upon the theatre. Freedom, action, passion, the audiences desired, and these they found in the work of the romantic playwrights. A summary of the development of these years, therefore, displays several salient lines of dramatic progress: the classical tragedy, decorous and well ordered, but lacking in emotion and movement; the crude tragi-comedy, showing a mingling of many diverse elements in a somewhat chaotic form, but pointing the way, as in *Promos and Cassandra*, to the romantic comedy of Greene and Shakespeare; the historical

play of a wholly novel type; the true comedy, as in *Roister Doister,* uniting Terentian and English ideals; and the cruder sort of farcical comedy seen in the native interludes of Heywood and his companions. The next chapter will show how, by the endeavours of a group of men who were the older contemporaries of Shakespeare, these types were fused into one.

CHAPTER IV

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PUBLIC THEATRES THE UNIVERSITY WITS

The Theatre in the Late Sixteenth Century

THE tracing of dramatic developments has already taken us to the nineties of the sixteenth century, a date when the theatrical activity in England was in full swing. By this time the actual form of the miracle stage had long been forgotten by Metropolitan audiences, and a new type of theatre had been evolved. The interludes seem to have been performed mainly in the halls of well-to-do patrons of the drama, possibly on a raised daïs at one end of the room. The Court plays were also similarly arranged, with the addition of more spectacular and scenic elements. This was for the upper classes. For the populace in general inn-yards seem to have formed the first regular theatres since the time when the medieval crowds stood round the pageant in the village square. These inn-yards were usually square, with galleries running round the walls. Here it was that the actors hastily erected their stages of rough board and performed their interludes, and, later, their more elaborate plays. But such yards must soon have been found unsatisfactory, chiefly because of the lack of a permanent stage and the inconveniences attendant upon that want. We are not surprised, therefore, to find that the thought of building permanent structures for theatrical performances soon forced itself upon the actors and those interested in the companies. The first playhouse in London was erected in the year 1576 in Shoreditch, well out of reach of the civic authorities.

The reason for the location of this theatre is to be found in the composition of the companies of actors and in the Government's attitude toward play-performances in general.



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The four theatres, indicated by flags, are the Swan, Hope, Rose, and Globe.

For long the Court had had its regular bands of minstrels and players, holding peculiarly privileged positions; but with the growth of a more regular drama there naturally sprang into being countless bands of actors wholly unassociated with the Court, although usually attached to the service of a particular lord of the realm. The difficulty of dealing satisfactorily with these bodies of actors soon made itself felt, and as a consequence there was passed a law that all players not in the service of a lord should be treated as rogues and vagabonds. This, in reality, made little difference to the actors, as many peers were willing to sponsor companies of players who wore the regular liveries of retainers, but were independent and earned their own livings. The Queen's men, the Lord Admiral's men, the Lord Chamberlain's men, and a host of others were secure from interference so long as they held to the ordinary laws of the land. The civic authorities in London and elsewhere mainly looked upon this licensed playing as an unmitigated evil and a nuisance, and in London they made every effort in their power to prevent acting within the City boundaries. It is for this reason that the first theatres, the Theatre itself, the Rose, The Globe, the Fortune, the Swan, were built either in the Shoreditch area, convenient of access from the east yet outside the walls of London, or else on the Bankside, to the south of the Thames, a noted haunt for seekers of amusement, both legitimate and otherwise. Before the close of the sixteenth century the only acting that took place within the City was at Blackfriars, where a theatre had been built for the child players who became so popular in later years.

The theatres already mentioned, with the exception of the Blackfriars playhouse, were all designated by the title 'public' in contradistinction to the 'private' theatre at Blackfriars, and, later, to those at Salisbury Court and Drury Lane. The private theatre, which becomes of immense importance in the early seventeenth century, was roofed in, lit by artificial light, and attended normally by a better-class audience. The public theatre was open to the sky, performances there took place in broad daylight,

and all classes intermingled in the yard or in the galleries. It is with this latter type of theatre that we are most concerned. Possibly no great thought was devoted to the designing of the first playhouse, and certainly later theatrical promoters were content to follow the general outlines of the buildings erected before their time. We shall be historically justified if we regard these theatres as the spontaneous expression of a natural love of dramatic shows, not based on any very profound determination on the part of actors or of managers to provide for the audiences the best and the most fitting accommodation. Fundamentally the designers of these public playhouses seem to have looked for a model to the inn-yard, although possibly some humanistic leanings may have given to them a few suggestions taken from the Roman amphitheatres. Their theatres, in any case, were round or octagonal,[1] with a stage set in the middle of a benchless open yard and tiers of galleries running round the entirety of the house. Over the stage was a small roof supported by pillars, and on top of all appeared a tiny turret, on which flew a flag to indicate that a play was in progress and from which a trumpeter announced to all the commencement of a performance.

It is not necessary here to enter into the many debatable problems connected with the *minutiæ* of Elizabethan stage construction. A summary of generally accepted truths, in so far as these bear upon the structure of the plays, will be sufficient.

The main stage was open, with a curtain at the back and two or more doors, through which the actors entered. Not only did the 'groundlings' surround this platform, but gallants able to pay for the privilege sat on the stage itself. Two important consequences resulted from this. Firstly, no scenery as we know it could be introduced on the main stage. Primitive effects securable by the introduction of movable properties were all that the limitations allowed. A tree in a tub might symbolize a forest, a bed wheeled in might suggest a chamber, a flaring torch might suggest in the warmth of a June sun the darkness of a

[1] The Fortune, erected at a later date, was square.



Footer: THE SWAN THEATRE 68

cavern, but beyond that nothing was possible. Having no obligation to consider the expense of scenery, the actor-managers did not require to reflect on the actual settings of plays; and the dramatists were free to make four or forty scenes to their plays as they wished. The structure of Elizabethan dramas, therefore, cannot be discussed on the standards of present-day theatrical art. Still further, the absence of scenery made necessary the introduction of a large amount of explanatory reference. The audience had to be told it was dark, had to be let into the secret that this was a hall, a garden, a castle, a dungeon, and to this we owe a great deal of the sheer poetry of the late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century drama. Such description, rendered necessary by the special conditions of the Elizabethan theatre, would be manifestly artificial and out of place in modern plays designed for a "picture-frame" stage. The second consequence of the fact that the audience so surrounded the actors was that more intimacy between the two was possible than nowadays. The audience came, as it were, *into* the drama. The clothes of the players were the ordinary Elizabethan clothes, if a trifle more resplendent, so that the illusion was perhaps greater than it could ever be in our own time, and this led toward the elaboration of certain dramatic conventions which to-day seem artificial and weak. The soliloquy is one of these. For an actor to mouth out a soliloquy in a large theatre from behind the footlights so that his words may carry to the galleries is purely artificial; but for an actor in this Elizabethan playhouse to utter his thoughts as it might be to his intimate friends surrounding him is no such absurdity. So too with the aside. The aside in modern times has to be shouted, and the actor can never get across the footlights to say it. In the sixteenth-century playhouse it must have been perfectly simple for the performer to turn for a moment to the groundlings near him and softly whisper his inner conviction or determination.

This main stage, however, by no means exhausted the possibilities of the Elizabethan theatre. At least two other portions were utilized by the actors, the rear stage and the

balconies. Behind the back wall lay a smaller inner room, possibly a curtained part of the tiring-house, in which occasionally scenes were enacted. This portion of the stage could at will be 'discovered' by drawing the curtain, and here property of various sorts might be set while action was proceeding on the outer stage. In this inner room Ferdinand and Miranda would be seen playing their innocent game of chess; it could pass for a cave, a bedroom, a shop, at the desire of the players. While nothing can be said for the purely fanciful theory which supposes that all Elizabethan plays were formed on a plan which made action on the main stage and action on the inner stage alternate, the use of this room behind the curtain with its possibilities for stage settings must not be lost sight of when we study the Elizabethan drama. The other locality utilized by the actors stood above the stage proper. It has already been noted that galleries ran round the entirety of the house, and that portion of the lower gallery which passed over the stage proper seems frequently to have been used by the players as well as by the audience. One section of it no doubt housed the musicians: it was the "musique room"; but another served for Juliet's balcony, for the walls of Calais, or for a battlement of the Tower. The stage direction, so often to be met with in the original texts, bidding the characters "Enter above" invariably applies to this balcony over the stage. In the balcony were evidently real windows, which could be opened and shut at will, and the doors below could be regarded as street doors leading to a house, the first floor of which was the gallery itself. It is only by an understanding of these three stages and their constant use by the actors that we can gain a true appreciation of Elizabethan stagecraft.

Finally, a word must be said concerning the retention of older conventions borrowed from the mystery tradition. In many ways the Elizabethan theatre was symbolic, in that the audience were prepared to accept not complete realism, but a suggestion of realism, in the effects produced on the stage. One or two examples may serve to make this clear. A situation frequently occurs in plays where





Two Elizabethan Stages

one character is presumed to be in a room, pursued by his enemies. He dashes in and locks a door while his foes clamour without. On the Globe stage quite obviously this had to be done conventionally. All the doors leading to the stage could not be locked, and the spectators were content if but one was closed. The others were put for the moment out of mind. So, too, the old convention whereby characters could walk over or round the stage and thereby be supposed to travel many weary leagues was retained in a slightly altered form. A dramatist, for instance, wished to show two characters in Rome and then to foreshorten their journey to Venice. He bids them go out at one door and enter at another, and the voyage is done. Costume, also, must often have been symbolical. Just as characters in the mysteries or moralities could enter upon the stage in "a suit to go invisible in" and be presumed non-existent by the audience, so Ariel in *The Tempest* could vanish from mortal gaze by a similar means. It is natural that costume should be still one of the chief things regarded by the actors. We have already seen from the records of the mystery plays how precious these costumes were for medieval players and spectators; the invaluable records of Philip Henslowe preserved at Dulwich College prove the wealth of the Elizabethan companies in the same respect.[1] If the actors did not expend much money on scenery they certainly expended it on clothes. Thus in an "Inventary of the goods of my Lord Admeralls men, tacken the 10 of Marche in the yeare 1598" we read of certain rich stuffs "gone and loste," including

> j orenge taney satten dublet, layd thycke with gowld lace . . .
> j payr of carnatyon satten Venesyons, layd with gold lace . . .
> Harey the fyftes dublet
> Harey the fyftes vellet gowne

and in another inventory of "Clownes Sewtes and Hermetes Sewtes" we hear of

> j senatores gowne, j hoode, and 5 senatores capes
> j sewtte for Nepton . . .

[1] For Henslowe's *Diary* and the accompanying papers see the excellent edition prepared by Dr W. W. Greg.

iiij Herwodes [? heralds'] cottes, and iij sogers cottes, and j green gown for Maryan [*i.e.*, Maid Marian]
vj grene cottes for Roben Hoode, and iiij knaves sewtes . . .
The Mores lymbes,[1] and Hercolles lymes . . .
Eves bodeyes [bodice] . . .
j payer of yelow cotton sleves, j gostes sewt, and j gostes bodeyes.

So, also, we learn of other costumes in the possession of the Lord Admiral's men:

j payer of whitte saten Venesons cut with coper lace
j ash coller satten doublett, lacyd with gold lace
j peche coller satten doublett . . .
j Mores cotte . . .
j payer of French hosse, cloth of gowld
j payer of cloth of gowld hosse with sylver paines . . .
Tamberlynes cotte, with coper lace . . .
Tamberlanes breches, of crymson vellvet. . . .

The list is a lengthy one, and shows the riches in this respect of the sixteenth-century companies. Ere leaving this subject it may be of interest to note a few of the 'properties' in the possession of the same company in 1598. We read there of

j rocke, j cage, j tombe, j Hell mought.

The hell-mouth is clearly a relic of the mystery plays. The rock appears in many dramas, and the cage was no doubt Bajazet's cage in *Tamburlaine*. The inventory continues:

j tome of Guido, j tome of Dido, j bed-steade . . .
ij marche panes, & the sittie of Rome.

This "city of Rome" is interesting. When we put it alongside of a later entry, "the clothe of the Sone and Mone," we may well ask ourselves whether primitive painted scenery of a kind may not have been occasionally used even in the sixteenth century. The other articles, however, are all either manual properties or properties of a material sort:

j globe, & j golden scepter; iij clobes [clubs] . . .
j gowlden fleece; ij rackets; j baye tree . . .
j wooden canepie; owld Mahemetes head . . .
Ierosses [Iris's] head, and raynbowe; j littell alter.

[1] Malone suggests these were Aaron's limbs for *Titus Andronicus*. 'Hercolles' is Hercules.

viij viserdes; Tamberlyne brydell; j wooden matook.
Cupedes bowe, and quiver . . .
j bores head & Serberosse [Cerberus] iij heades . . .
ij mose [moss] banckes, & j snake . . .
Mercures wings; Tasso picter; j helmet with a dragon; j shelde, with iij lyones; j elme bowle . . .
iij tymbrells; j dragon in fostes [Faustus]
j lyone; ij lyon heades; j great horse with his leages [legs];
j sack-bute . . .
j poopes miter.
iij Imperial crownes; j playne crowne.
j gostes crowne . . .
j cauderm [cauldron] for the Jewe [in *The Jew of Malta*].

Many of these properties were evidently designed especially for plays of Marlowe and Greene, and these lists of Henslowe, with their many references to *Tamburlaine* and *Dr Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta,* fitly introduce us to the work of the University Wits.

(ii) The University Wits; Lodge, Nashe, and Peele

In dealing with the work of this group of men it will be necessary to bear in mind the somewhat chaotic condition of the drama that preceded them. The classicists had form, but no fire; the popular dramatists had interest, but little sense of form. Drama, that is to say, was struggling between a well-formed chill and a structureless enthusiasm. The great merit of the University Wits was that they came, with their poetry and their passion and their academical training, to unite these two forces and thus to give to Shakespeare a pliable and fitting medium for the expression of his genius. All these men, with the doubtful exception of Kyd, had had a training at one of the Universities. Robert Greene (1558–92) took his B.A. at Cambridge in 1578 and his M.A. in 1583; Thomas Lodge (*c.* 1557–1625) entered Trinity College, Oxford, in 1573, taking his B.A. in 1557; John Lyly (*c.* 1554–1606) matriculated at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1571, securing his B.A. in 1573 and his M.A. in 1575; Christopher Marlowe (1564–93) matriculated at Corpus Christi College, Cam-

bridge, in 1581, took his B.A. in 1584 and his M.A. in 1587; Thomas Nashe (1567–*c.* 1601) went to St John's College, Cambridge, in 1582, and was awarded his B.A. in 1586; George Peele (*c.* 1557–96) entered Broadgates Hall, Oxford, in 1571 and Christ Church in 1574, taking his B.A. in 1577 and his M.A. in 1579. Thomas Kyd (1558–94), although he had a training at Merchant Taylors School, does not seem to have attended any university. His relations with the others, no less than his interest in Seneca, nevertheless entitle him to be considered in this group. Nearly all these men contributed to literature other works besides plays. Lyly gave a new prose style in *Euphues;* Nashe wrote his picaresque novel *Jacke Wilton;* Lodge produced the fanciful *Rosalynde,* and Greene the romantic *Menaphon.* Practically all, too, are alike in living peculiarly Bohemian lives in the Grub Street of their day. Marlowe died in a tavern brawl from a poniard wound; Greene spent his last hours in writing a penitential *Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance;* Lodge, according to Gosson, became "little better than a vagrant, looser than liberty, [and] lighter than vanity itself"; Lyly is spoken of as "Vicemaster of Pauls and the Foolemaster of the Theatre"; Nashe seems to have roystered it in the usual manner, and Peele's *Merry Conceited Jests* no doubt give an indication of that author's life. As for Kyd, we know how he got into trouble with Marlowe in the year 1593 for writing certain "atheistic" papers and was arrested on suspicion of having penned some "loud and mutinous libels." They were all Bohemians, careless, sometimes ungodly, heavy drinkers, acquainted with sin; but they gave to us the towering blank verse of *Tamburlaine,* the lovely romance of *Friar Bacon,* the insight into character of *Dr Faustus.* Whatever they were in actual life they laid a sure basis for the English theatre.

It may be best here to take those who have given least to the stage, reserving the criticism of Greene, Lyly, Kyd, and Marlowe to the last. Lodge has left nothing save *The Wounds of Ciuill War* (*c.* 1588; printed 1594) and a portion of *A Looking Glasse for London and England* (*c.* 1590;

printed 1594), a play written in collaboration with Greene. The latter play is interesting as a late relic of a morality drama, but it contains hardly anything that is new. Nor does the former rise above mediocrity. Lodge, while he has a decided power over the lyric and a charm in his fictional art, gave practically nothing to the theatre. In this respect he is the least of the University Wits. Nashe has left very little more than Lodge—only his comedy of *Summers last will and Testament* (1592; printed 1600) along with a not quite determinable share in *Dido* survive, although we know that he took part in writing the unfortunate *Isle of Dogs* (non-extant) in 1597. It is peculiar that the one play preserved to us should also be cast in something of the morality tradition, although it is modified by the free introduction of realistic comedy and satirical references. Nashe is another of this group more important for his work in fiction than for his dramas.

Besides three or four lost plays, and a suggestion of his pen in upward of a dozen dramas of the late sixteenth century, five works by Peele have been preserved—*The Araygnement of Paris A Pastorall* (printed 1584), *The Battell of Alcazar* (*c.* 1589; printed 1594),[1] *The Famous Chronicle of King Edwarde the first* (printed 1593), *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe* (*c.* 1593; printed 1599), and *The Old Wiues Tale. A pleasant conceited Comedie* (*c.* 1592; printed 1595). These form a surer basis for judging the author's work as a playwright than was given us in the case of Lodge or of Nashe, and over and above these regular plays there are besides one or two entertainments which cast some further light on his power as a dramatic poet. As is evident, Peele's theatrical work is diverse in character. A pastoral, a romantic tragedy, a chronicle history, a kind of mystery play, and a romantic literary satire show clearly the breadth of his mind and the range of his genius. In all of them we note a high level of poetic attainment. His

[1] On the problems connected with the relationship between the printed text of this play and the manuscript 'plot' see W. W. Greg's *Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements: The Battle of Alcazar and Orlando Furioso* (Malone Society, 1922).

verse at times has caught something of the Marlovian melody, as in the last scene of *King Edward I:*

> *Gloster* thy King is partner of thy heauiness,
> Although nor tongue nor eies bewraie his meane,
> For I haue lost a flowre as faire as thine,
> A loue more deare, for *Elinor* is dead,
> But since the heauenlie ordinance decrees,
> That all thinges change in their prefixed time,
> Be thou content and beare it in thy breast,
> Thy swelling griefe as needes I must mine,
> Thy *Ione* of *Acon* and my Queen deceast,
> Shall haue that Honor as beseemes their state.
> You peeres of England, see in roiall pompe,
> These breathles bodies be entombed straight,
> With tried colours couered all with blacke,
> Let Spanish steedes as swift as fleeting winde,
> Conuaie these Princes to their funerall.

At other times it catches a new note of quiet romanticism which comes closer to the music of Greene. At his best he rises to a perfect height of lyric diction, as in the oft-quoted lines in his first play:

> Not *Iris* in her pride and brauerie,
> Adornes her arche with such varietie:
> Nor doth the milke white way in frostie night,
> Appeare so faire and beautifull in sight:
> As done these fieldes, and groues, and sweetest bowres,
> Bestrewed and deckt with partie collord flowers.
> Alonge the bubling brookes & siluer glyde,
> That at the bottome doth in sylence slyde,
> The waterie flowers and lillies on the bankes,
> Like blazing cometes burgen all in rankes:
> Vnder the *Hathorne* and the *Poplar* tree,
> Where sacred *Phœbe* may delight to be:
> The *Primerose* and the purple *Hyacinthe,*
> The dayntie *Violet* and the holsome *Minthe*:
> The dooble *Daisie,* and the Couslip queene
> Of sommer floures, do ouer peere the greene:
> And rounde about the valley as ye passe,
> Yee may ne see for peeping flowers the grasse.

Poetry, however, brilliant as it may be, does not produce drama, and we note in Peele a certain weakness in constructive power. His plots are decidedly slight, and he does not seem to take sufficient care in the ordering of his

scenes. Moreover, he allows poetry to enter into scenes from which it ought to be excluded. In *David and Bethsabe*, for example, Absalon is hanged by the hair. In this uncomfortable situation one would hardly look for well-ordered blank-verse utterance from him, but Peele cannot resist the temptation to indulge in his favourite *métier;* cries Absalon:

> What angrie angel sitting in these shades,
> Hath laid his cruell hands vpon my haire,
> And holds my body thus twixt heauen and earth?
> Hath Absalon no souldier neere his hand,
> That may vntwine me this vnpleasant curle,
> Or wound this tree that rauisheth his lord?
> O God behold the glorie of thy hand,
> And choisest fruit of Natures workemanship,
> Hang like a rotten branch vpon this tree,
> Fit for the axe, and ready for the fire.
> Since thou withholdst all ordinarie helpe
> To lose my bodie from this bond of death,
> O let my beautie fill these sencelesse plants,
> With sence and power to lose me from this plague,
> And worke some wonder to preuent his death,
> Whose life thou madst a speciall miracle.

When all is said and done, it is Peele's comedies that will prove his most lasting claim to fame. The early pastoral exists for no plot, but for its beauty of romantic wording, and *The Old Wives' Tale* has a perfect charm of romantic humour. It is in the development of that particular type of humour which was later graced by Shakespeare that Peele proves himself greatest. Like Shakespeare he can induce laughter of a peculiarly mellowed sort by the juxtaposition of reality and romance, and he can create an atmosphere which unites these two worlds in one harmony. In *The Old Wives' Tale* Antic, Frolic, and Fantastic enter lost in a forest; Clunch, coming in with a lantern and a candle, takes them to his cottage. There Madge, his wife, starts telling a fairy-tale, when suddenly the characters of the tale take visible shape and enact their story before the cottagers. Into this purely romantic fantasy Peele succeeds in introducing an amount of literary satire, Gabriel Harvey's attempts at Latinized

verse in English being subjected to particularly severe ridicule. This is the first dramatic literary satire in English; it is one of the completest expressions of romanticism in the sixteenth century outside of the works of Shakespeare himself.

(iii) Marlowe

The four greater members of the group of University Wits remain for consideration; each of these deserves a far more detailed attention than could be devoted to Lodge, Nashe, or Peele. It may be well to start with the most individual and the most talented of the pre-Shakespearians, Christopher Marlowe. Of his work several well-known plays have been preserved: *Tamburlaine the Great* (*c.* 1587; printed 1590), *The tragicall History of D. Faustus* (*c.* 1588; printed 1604 and 1616), *The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Iew of Malta* (*c.* 1589; printed 1633), *The troublesome raigne and lamentable death of Edward the second, King of England* (*c.* 1592; printed 1594), *The Massacre at Paris* (1593; the one contemporary quarto is undated), and *The Tragedie of Dido Queen of Carthage* (*c.* 1593; printed 1594 as by Marlowe and Nashe). Besides these, *Lusts Dominion; Or, The Lascivious Queen* was printed in 1657 as by Marlowe, but has been almost unanimously rejected as a work of his pen. Quite rightly it is the first four plays which have been hailed by enthusiasts as masterpieces of dramatic art. *The Massacre at Paris* is admittedly a poorly wrought and poorly written drama; and *Dido* rarely rises above the levels of unimpassioned blank verse. Its sole interest lies in the presentation of the heroine, a presentation which takes on added significance when we consider the general lack of women characters in Marlowe's other plays.

Of the four greater dramas *Tamburlaine, Dr Faustus,* and *The Jew of Malta* stand together as displaying certain common characteristics all distinct from the ordinary tragic conventions of the time. These characteristics may best be discussed together, as a separate analysis of each individual play rather tends to obscure the unity of conception which dominates all three. In the first place we

note the influence of Machiavelli, who, as we can see from the many references in contemporary literature, was more and more impressing himself upon the English public. Most heard of him by report, and took him as a symbol of all that was atheistical, immoral, and corrupt. In reality, Machiavelli is far from corrupt. His *Prince* is merely a summing up of regular Renascence ideals of conduct; it is the culmination of that individualism which marks off the newly awakened Europe from the anonymity and communal ideals of the Middle Ages. Machiavelli had made a god of *virtù,* that quality in a man which drives him to find free and full expressions for his own thoughts and emotions. It is this *virtù* on which Marlowe has seized, not without some tremors of conscience in spite of his liberated mind. So he presents his heroes, Tamburlaine, Dr Faustus, and Barabas, overriding the ordinary moral codes of their times in an effort to find the complete realization of their particular ideals; and in *The Jew of Malta* he brings Machiavelli forward in person to speak the prologue to his tragedy. His words show a peculiar mingling of true love of Machiavelli's philosophy and half-terrified awe resulting from a contemplation of his "villainy."

> Albeit the world thinke *Macheuill* is dead,
> Yet was his soule but flowne beyond the *Alpes*. . . .
> To some perhaps my name is odious,
> But such as loue me gard me from their tongues,
> And let them know that I am *Macheuill,*
> And weigh not men, and therefore not mens words.
> Admir'd I am of those that hate me most.
> Though some speake openly against my bookes,
> Yet will they reade me, and thereby attaine
> To *Peters* Chayre: And when they cast me off,
> Are poyson'd by my climing followers.
> I count Religion but a childish Toy,
> And hold there is no sinne but Ignorance. . . .
> O' th poore petty wites
> Let me be enuy'd and not pittied!

The "poore petty wites" are those who possess not *virtù* and the passion for self-realization.

One important result of this insistence upon *virtù* must be noted. Call it what we please, *virtù,* ambition, will,

tends to overlook class, and accordingly the dramas of Marlowe break away slightly from the more ancient medieval plan. For the Middle Ages tragedy was a thing of princes, and princes only; for Marlowe it was a thing of individual heroes. Thus his Tamburlaine, king though he may be by the end of the drama, is born a peasant. The Jew is but a Mediterranean moneylender, and Faustus an ordinary German doctor and alchemist. The medieval conception of the royalty of tragedy is here being supplanted by the Renascence ideal of individual worth. It is the union of the two which gives us the majesty of *Macbeth* and of *Lear*.

In the same way, we may observe a change in Marlowe's dramas from the medieval theory that tragedy invariably represents a falling into misery or adversity from prosperity or happiness. Death comes to all Marlowe's tragic heroes, but the kernel of his dramas lies rather in the struggle of a brave human soul against forces which in the end prove too great for it. The medieval conception of tragedy was a distinctly moral one; drama had to show this falling into adversity, and thereby inculcate a didactic lesson. There is no moral of this sort in Marlowe's plays. The interest centres wholly on the personality of the hero, and the pleasure derived from the drama comes from watching that personality, comes from the sense of greatness which that personality brings with it. This, again, is a secret which Marlowe taught to Shakespeare. Part, at least, of the tremendous impression we gain from witnessing *Othello* and *Macbeth* springs from the essential nobility of the heroes of these two plays. This is one of Marlowe's most outstanding contributions to the development of a truly august type of English tragedy. His main conception of serious drama—Renascence *virtù* battling on to success and then falling unconquered before fate—is at the root of all the great seventeenth-century tragic activity; only, Shakespeare made his figures more human and stressed more the fatal flaw in the greatness of their characters.

In other ways, too, Marlowe in these plays advanced far beyond the previous attempts at serious drama. Already by the time when *Gorboduc* appeared blank verse had taken

the place of rime as the chief medium for tragic dialogue, but that blank verse was still unformed, artificial, and monotonous. Marlowe it was who breathed into it the life-spirit of poetry. All his heroes are essentially poets in their nature, for they are all reflections of Marlowe's own personality. He seeks to conquer the impossible in drama, to find the complete expression for all his hopes and desires, and he can put that same passion into the ambition for earthly dominion, for power over the intangible, for limitless revenge. Tamburlaine is thus a poet of essence. He delights in all the gorgeousness of imperial trappings, and he catches at the colour of rich words.

> Your Maiesty shall shortly haue your wish,
> and ride in tryumph through *Persepolis,*

says Meander, and the monarch's reply is thoroughly characteristic:

> and ride in tryumph through *Persepolis,*
> Is it not braue to be a King, *Techelles?*
> *Vsumcasane* and *Theridamas,*
> Is it not passing braue to be a King,
> And ride in tryumph through *Persepolis?*

His unquenchable aspirations lead him into the most harmonious of melodies, as when he gives expression to that passion shared by all his fellows:

> Nature, that fram'd vs of foure Elements,
> Warring within our breastes for regiment,
> Doth teach vs all to haue aspiring mindes:
> Our soules, whose faculties can comprehend
> The wondrous architecture of the world,
> and measure euery wandring Plannets course,
> Still climing after knowledge infinite,
> and alwaies mouing as the restlesse Spheares,
> Wils vs to weare our selues and neuer rest
> Vntil we reach the ripest fruite of all,
> that perfect blisse and sole felicite,
> the sweete fruition of an earthly crowne.

It is he, too, who most clearly gives utterance to Marlowe's own love of the impossible in poetry, expressing for all time what must have been felt by poets since poetry first

became an art, and what must ever be felt by poets to the end of Time:

> If all the pens that euer poets held
> Had fed the feeling of their maisters thoughts,
> And euery sweetnes that inspir'd their harts,
> Their minds, and muses on admyred theames;
> If all the heauenly Quintessence they still
> From their immortall flowers of Poesy,
> Wherein, as in a myrrour, we perceiue
> The highest reaches of a humaine wit;
> If these had made one Poems period,
> And all combin'd in Beauties worthinesse,
> Yet should there houer in their restlesse heads
> One thought, one grace, one woonder, at the least,
> Which into words, no vertue can digest.

Nor is Faustus far different. With him the passion takes the form of a desire to conquer the secret force of nature, but his words have the same glow of enthusiastic rapture:

> O what a world of profite and delight,
> Of power, of honour, and omnipotence,
> Is promised to the Studious Artizan?
> All things that moue betweene the quiet Poles
> Shall be at my command: Emperors and Kings,
> Are but obey'd in their seuerall Prouinces:
> But his dominion that exceeds in this,
> Stretcheth as farre as doth the mind of man:
> A sound Magitian is a Demi-god,
> Here tire my braines to get a Deity.

Marlowe is the poet of passion *par excellence,* and nowhere does he show his genius for high, astounding phrases so much as he does when he is speaking of the rapture of beauty. His verse takes on a strange iridescence where the marvelling at the loveliness becomes confused with the rich sound of words loved for their own sake. This is especially true of Tamburlaine's cry over the dying Zenocrate:

> Blacke is the beautie of the brightest day,
> The Golden Ball of heauens eternall fire,
> That daunc'd with glory on the siluer waues,
> Now wants the fewell that enflam'd his beames,
> And all with faintnesse, and for foule disgrace,
> He binds his temples with a frowning cloud,

Readie to darken earth with endlesse night,
Zenocrate that gaue him light and life,
Whose eyes shot fire from their Iuorie bowers,
And tempered euery soule with liuely heat.
Now by the mallice of the angrie skies,
Whose iealousie admits no second mate,
Drawes in the comfort of her latest breath,
Al dasled with the hellish mystes of death.
Now walke the angels on the walles of heauen,
as Centinels to warne th' immortall soules,
To entertaine diuine *Zenocrate.*
Apollo, Cynthia, and the ceaselesse lamps,
That gently lookt vpon the loathsome earth,
Shine downwards now no more, but deck the heauens,
To entertaine diuine *Zenocrate.*
The Christall springs whose taste illuminates,
Refined eyes with an eternall sight,
Like tryed siluer runs through Paradice,
To entertaine diuine *Zenocrate.*
The Cherubins and holy Seraphins,
That sing and play before the King of Kings,
Vse all their voyces and their instruments
To entertaine diuine *Zenocrate.*
and in this sweet and curious harmony,
The God that tunes this musicke to our soules,
Holds out his hand in highest maiestie
To entertaine diuine *Zenocrate.*

It is equally true of Faustus' still better-known eulogy of Helen:

Was this the face that Launcht a thousand ships,
And burnt the toplesse Towers of *Ilium?*
Sweet *Hellen* make me immortall with a kisse;
Her lips sucke forth my soule, see where it flies.
Come *Hellen,* come, giue me my soule againe,
Here will I dwell, for heauen is in these lippes,
And all is drosse, that is not *Helena.*
I will be *Paris,* and for loue of thee,
Instead of *Troy* shall *Wittenberg* be sack't,
And I will combat with weake *Menelaus,*
And weare thy colours on my plumed crest,
Yea, I will wound *Achilles* in the heele,
And then returne to *Hellen* for a kisse.
O thou art fairer then the euenings aire,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand starres;
Brighter art thou then flaming *Iupiter,*

> When he appear'd to haplesse *Semele:*
> More louely then the Monarch of the sky,
> In wanton *Arethusa's* azure armes,
> And none but thou shalt be my Paramour.

Before passing to glance at some of those dramatic elements wherein Marlowe proved his inferiority to Shakespeare, it were well to mark the great scene in *Dr Faustus* which, more than anything else, points out Marlowe's true greatness. All previous dramas, including *Tamburlaine,* had dealt with single-minded individuals. If a struggle in the heart of a hero was introduced, that struggle normally took the form which is to be seen in the morality plays—the struggle being symbolized by conflicting bodies of minor characters. In *Dr Faustus* Marlowe attempted something new—the delineation of a struggle within the mind of the chief figure. This struggle is certainly somewhat primitive in its expression, but it is a foretaste of those "inward characteristics" toward which, as Professor Vaughan has pointed out, drama in its development inevitably tends. Faustus, in this respect, is unquestionably the greatest tragic figure in sixteenth-century literature outside the work of Shakespeare.

However great Marlowe proved himself in poetry, he was, nevertheless, not a Shakespeare. He never quite succeeded in reaching the loftiest summits of tragic art, and this perhaps was more owing to certain features in his own character than to the fact that he died young. In structure we see that all these three plays are faulty. *Dr Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta* have assuredly come down to us in mutilated texts; but even their original form must have been weak. *Tamburlaine* has no unity except such as lies in the presence of the hero; *Dr Faustus* is largely a collection of heterogeneous scenes, loosely pinned together; *The Jew of Malta* opens well, but sinks into mediocrity toward the middle and close. With Marlowe we are in the presence of a distinctly passionate but unbalanced genius, a man lacking the serenity and the calm-eyed power which gave to Shakespeare a large part of his greatness. With his insistence upon the tremendous

emotions of these supermen heroes, Marlowe, moreover, tended to lose sight of the minor figures in his tragedies. All his heroes, by their very greatness, stand alone. We have the feeling that they have no mortal force to fight against. They are lonely figures in a world of Lilliputians. This may be, to a certain extent, a characteristic likewise of the Shakespearian tragedy, but always Shakespeare has given more of individuality to his lesser figures than has Marlowe. Horatio, Cassio, Banquo, and Kent have independent existence such as Meander and Wagner never could have. This want of relief is particularly to be noted in the almost complete lack of women in Marlowe's plays. Zenocrate plays but a shadowy part in *Tamburlaine;* Helen is but a vision in *Dr Faustus;* and Abigail hardly calls for our sympathy in *The Jew of Malta.* Again, while tragedy may be, in the main, masculine in character, this lack proves the circumscribed limits of Marlowe's art. A similar deficiency is to be felt in the entirely serious tone of his plays. The comic scenes in *Dr Faustus,* we may presume, were not from his hand. His plays are all pitched on the one note, the note of enthusiasm and of tragic passion. Never does he show the breadth and the vision which Shakespeare displays in the gravediggers of *Hamlet* or the porter of *Macbeth.*

It is just possible, of course, that Marlowe would have flourished forth into a more comprehensive dramatist had his life been spared; and for this there is evidence in the play of *Edward II.* This obviously belongs to the chronicle-history tradition, and hence stands apart from the others. There are more human elements in it, although the *virtù* so noticeable in the earlier dramas makes its appearance here in the figure of Mortimer, who is opposed to the weak-willed King. There is an effort in this play at introducing more complexity in a theme of resolution and of irresolution, and some of the dialogue reaches a pitch of tragic excellence finer than any of the more gorgeous paragraphs of the preceding plays. As Edward lies in the misery of his prison his words have a tragically pathetic note which seizes upon the imagination:

And there in mire and puddle haue I stood,
This ten daies space, and least that I should sleepe,
One plaies continually vpon a Drum,
They giue me bread and water being a King;
So that for want of sleepe and sustenance,
My mindes distempered, and my bodies numbe,
And whether I haue limmes or no I know not,
O would my blood dropt out from euery vaine,
As doth this water from my tattered robes:
Tell *Isabell* the Queene, I lookt not thus,
When for her sake I ran at tilt in France,
And there vnhorst the Duke of *Cleremont.*

Nothing quite like this had been known in the earlier chronicle histories. Hardly too much may be said of Marlowe as a poet, as a pioneer, as a genius of unquestioned individuality and independence both of thought and of feeling.

(iv) Kyd

If Marlowe was responsible for developing one type of tragedy Thomas Kyd is responsible for elaborating another. Of his works we possess the famous and notorious *The Spanish Tragedie* (*c.* 1589; printed without a date, and, with additions, in 1602), and *Cornelia* (unacted; printed 1594). In addition to these he has been credited with the authorship of an early *Hamlet,* which, however, recent research tends to attribute to Shakespeare himself. *Cornelia* hardly merits any close attention; its blank verse at times is fair, but it is after all only a translation of Robert Garnier's Senecan *Cornélie* (1574). *The Spanish Tragedy,* on the other hand, marks a distinct era in the development of English tragedy. This play was an instant success, capturing completely the hearts of the late sixteenth-century audiences, and retaining its popularity long into the seventeenth century. Its fame is attested to by allusion after allusion in the plays and the pamphlets of the time. This popularity, and the fact that it gave rise to a host of similar plays, including Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* makes it necessary to pause for a moment in order to gain an idea of those features in it which most affected the spectators of the time. The story is one of revenge. We are

introduced in the first scene to the ghost of Andrea, the slain husband of Bellimperia. The latter falls in love with Horatio, who is strangled by Lorenzo, Bellimperia's brother. Horatio's father, Hieronimo, secures his revenge by means of a play within the play, and dies glorying in his deed. It may be noted here that the portions which deal with the painter first found in the quarto of 1602 are not by Kyd, but were added, perhaps by Jonson, who was paid for "adicyons" to the play in 1602, or, as some have thought, by Webster. In discussing the value of the drama we must treat these scenes as separate from the original play. What is it that these contemporaries saw in this piece? In the first place they found a Senecan play adapted to popular requirements. There is plenty of action upon the stage; there is an interest in it which the neo-classical dramas normally lack; and at the same time there is evidence in the authorship of a man who has studied the classical stage and learnt its most telling features. On the whole, the play is well constructed, and Seneca's ghosts and revenge themes have freely been borrowed from. Kyd, too, knew the tastes of the audience, and his tragedy is, like Shakespeare's plays, full of strong external action. The stage effects are well managed; the murders are thrillingly committed; and the whole work rises at the end to a climax of interest in the play scene. In some ways *The Spanish Tragedy* appealed to a Grand Guignol audience, and gave something too to those who still retained faith in classical drama. This able presentation of the story reveals the difference between Kyd and Marlowe. None of Marlowe's plays are well constructed; Kyd knows the theatre so well that he can make fullest use of all the opportunities it has to offer. Kyd, moreover, was a poet in his own way, and, without being able to rival Marlowe in writing the high, astounding line, he succeeds in producing dialogue that is forceful and capable, such as, for example, those words of Bellimperia and Balthazar at the opening of Act II, scene 2:

Bel. My hart (sweet freend) is like a ship at sea:
She wisheth port, where riding all at ease
She may repaire what stormie times haue worne,

And leaning on the shore may sing with ioy
That pleasure followes paine, and blisse annoy.
Possession of thy loue is th' onely port,
Wherein my hart, with feares and hopes long tost,
Each howre doth wish and long to make resort,
There to repaire the ioyes that it hath lost,
And, sitting safe, to sing in Cupid's Quire
The sweetest blisse is crowne of loues desire.
Bathazar and Lorenzo aboue.
Bal. O sleepe, mine eyes, see not my loue prophande;
Be deafe, my eares, heare not my discontent;
Dye, hart: another ioyes what thou deseruest.

Even these qualities, however, do not exhaust all the main features of Kyd's work. He had taken over the Senecan type as it appeared in *Gorboduc;* he had made it thrillingly effective; he had breathed into it the passion of fine blank verse; but he did something more than that. He contributed a new type of tragic hero to the stage. The main characters in tragedy up to his time had been "afflicted princes" or grandiloquent supermen; Kyd presented the hesitating type seen most magnificently in *Hamlet,* and allied that with madness, feigned and real. Hieronimo does not sweep to his revenge. He moves a step forward, hesitates, draws back, falls into a passion of indecision, and then completes his task. It was the subtlety of character delineation in Kyd's work which must most have appealed to the audiences of the time; they realized that here was something for which they had been seeking.

(v) Greene

The remaining pair of University Wits gave all their attention to the development of comedy. Robert Greene has left five plays: *The Comicall Historie of Alphonsus King of Aragon* (*c.* 1587; printed 1599), *A Looking Glasse for London and England* (written with Lodge *c.* 1590; printed 1594), *The Honorable Historie of frier Bacon, and frier Bongay* (*c.* 1589; printed 1594), *The Historie of Orlando Furioso* (*c.* 1591; printed 1594), and *The Scottish Historie of Iames the fourth, slaine at Flodden. Entermixed with*

a pleasant Comedie, presented by Oboram, King of Fayeries (*c.* 1591; printed 1598). The first two of these may be neglected here. *Alphonsus* is an amateur work and very reminiscent of *Tamburlaine;* the other play has already been glanced at briefly. *Orlando Furioso,* also, requires but scant attention. Its theme, taken from Ariosto, but highly embroidered with fanciful touches, and its treatment do not raise it above the ordinary levels of the time. In *Friar Bacon,* however, and in *James IV* Greene has, as many critics have realized, contributed much to the development of romantic comedy in England. Romance we have already seen gathering way in the morality-interlude type of drama; it is here by Greene raised to the true height of art. The plot of *Friar Bacon* is sad enough, with its complications and barren stretches, but out of it there emerge two or three notable features. The first and greatest is the love between Margaret and Lacy. The story of the play shows us Friar Bacon and Friar Bongay, or Bungay, rivalling each other in magic, and revealing, by means of a marvellous glass, events that are taking place elsewhere. This portion of the plot introduces the low comic character of Miles, Bacon's scholar, and a Devil, who runs off with the magician on his back. Alongside of these figures move Edward, Prince of Wales, and Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, both in love with Margaret, the keeper's daughter. We have thus three distinct worlds mingled together—the world of magic, the world of aristocratic life, and the world of the country. These, by his art, Greene has woven together into a single harmony, showing the way to Shakespeare when the latter came to write *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* The cardinal feature of the romantic comedy is precisely this interweaving of diverse moods and surroundings, where princes meet with clowns, and fairies with artisans, added to the presentation of a rural love, usually spiritual in essence. The same atmosphere is to be discovered in *James IV.* Here the Kings of England and of Scotland, surrounded by a group of courtiers, meet in the same play with Bohan, a melancholy Scot, and Oboram, or Oberon, King of the Fairies. Here too is introduced a theme of romantic love,

with Dorothea, the best-drawn woman figure in sixteenth-century drama outside Shakespeare's comedies, as the heroine. The whole is fused into a unity by Greene's peculiar humour, cast over the entirety of the play. With Greene, then, we find even more fully elaborated that dramatic form in which realism and idealism meet, where elements apparently contradictory move in one common harmony.

The indebtedness of the drama to Greene is by no means confined to this presentation of romantic settings. His verse has a quality of its own not to be despised. Although normally it has a prevailingly iambic movement and is heavily influenced by the blank verse of Marlowe, Greene permits himself some liberties in his handling of it. We not only have lines which in their strength and beauty recall the melodies of Shakespeare, as in Margaret's words:

> Why thinks King *Henries* sonne that *Margrets* loue
> Hangs in the vncertain balance of proud time?

but we find scattered through his verses interesting variations from the iambic pentameter norm. Such a line as

> Poring vpon dark *Hecat's* principles

shows an interesting attempt to secure a variety rarely to be found in the more regular melodies of Greene's companions.

In characterization, too, Greene's contribution to the drama of his age is noteworthy. He is one of the first to draw the Rosalinds and Celias of Elizabethan times. Margaret and Dorothea are excellent portraits of women conceived and depicted in that romantic light which shone on so many works of this period. These women are real; yet they have some elements in them which seem ideal. Once more the two worlds meet. So, too, with Bohan of *James IV*, a character who seems the prototype of Jaques in *As You Like It*. There is in him at once realism and a certain touch of the romantic which makes him a fit if somewhat moody companion for Oberon.

(vi) Lyly

Finally we come to that poet who, in point of time, was the earliest of this group, John Lyly. More of his work has been preserved than of any of the others. His plays number eight in all: *A moste excellent Comedie of Alexander, Campaspe, and Diogenes* (1584), *Sapho and Phao* (1584), *Gallathea* (*c.* 1588; printed 1592), *Endimion, The Man in the Moone* (1588; printed 1591), *Midas* (1589–90; printed 1592), *Mother Bombie* (*c.* 1590; printed 1594), *Loves Metamorphosis* (*c.* 1590; printed 1601), and *The Woman in the Moone* (*c.* 1594; printed 1597). All of these are marked by similar features, features which serve to differentiate Lyly from the other University Wits. In the first place, unlike the rest, he looked to the Court for favour rather than to the spectators in the public theatres. Whereas his companions all wrote for the newly arising playhouses, Lyly's comedies were intended for the child actors in royal service. This makes his plays possess a tone and a delicacy lacking completely in the rougher and more bombastic pieces wrought for performance by adult players before the more unrefined audiences at the Theatre or at the Globe.

It is possible to classify these plays of Lyly's into several groups—those which are allegorical and mythical in tone, those which display realistic features, and those which mark the introduction of more or less historical features. Possibly the last group, exemplified in *Campaspe,* might be included in the first. As all Lyly's comedies, however, possess the same essential characteristics, it is unwise to consider the separate plays apart from the whole of his dramatic productivity.

It was Lyly who was largely responsible for the first elaboration of romantic sentiment. He found on the stage the abstractions of the moralities; he found also the crude comedy of realistic types. He found too the strict classical division of drama into particular forms—tragedy, comedy, and pastoral; and alongside of that he found the crude mingling of tragedy and of comedy as exemplified in the rough popular plays we have already considered. Deliberately he seems to have sought for some atmosphere

or for some method of treatment which might harmonize these apparently antagonistic spheres of interest, an atmosphere which is reflected in the humour and romantic fancy we have noted in the works of Peele and of Greene. This romantic fancy is with him more idealistic than it is with the other two men, and makes his plays move on a plane somewhat removed from terrestrial existence; but his importance as the inaugurator of this style cannot be overestimated. There is in his comedies a mellowed spirit under which seriousness and laughter meet, a world of poetic fancy wherein the deities of classical mythology live and move by the side of the human figures.

Separated as Lyly was from the neo-classicists in refusing to bow to the canon of sharply marked 'kinds' of dramatic poetry, he was at the same time thoroughly humanistic in his outlook. Terence taught him the technique which is displayed in his dramas, and the study of Greek myth led him into a strange realm with which but few Renascence artists were acquainted. The best way of estimating Lyly's mythological pictures is by comparing him with Botticelli. In both we find the classic age seen through the eyes of romance. In both there are delicate colourings, a certain mellowed sadness, a linking of earth with the spirit world. Here are realism and classicism and romanticism welded into one.

In style Lyly's importance has long been appreciated by scholars, and the title of his early novel, *Euphues,* has contributed a special adjective to the terminology of literary types. In its most exaggerated form this euphuistic style is dull, monotonous, and uninteresting, wearying the reader with the endless antitheses, the continual flow of artificial metaphors; but this was what his age was seeking. It was at least artistic, in the broader sense of the word. For the first time, almost, men found a prose style which bore upon it the evident marks of conscious artistry. Instead of rough strength there is grace; instead of blundering periods there is a refinement of thought and of phrase. What Lyly did for comic prose dialogue may easily be seen from even the few following lines quoted from *Mother Bombie:*

Dromio. Now, if I could meete with *Risio,* it were a world of waggery.

Risio. Oh that it were my chance, *Obuiam dare Dromio,* to stumble vpon *Dromio,* on whome I doo nothing but dreame.

Dromio. His knauerie and my wit, should make our masters that are wise, fooles; their children that are fooles, beggers; and vs two that are bond, free.

Risio. He to cosin, & I to coniure, would make such alterations, that our masters should serue themselues; the ideots, their children, serue vs; and we to wake our wits betweene them all.

For the first time also men found a suitable blank verse for comedy. Marlowe's richness and bombast and glory was ill suited for the expressing of lighter sentiments, whereas Lyly's verse, delicate if artificial, could convey excellently the quickness of his thought and the humorous images constantly fleeting through his brain. This prose and this verse Lyly frequently mingled in his comedies, and the interweaving of the two corresponds to the two worlds of reality and of the ideal. The same fusion is to be discovered in *As You Like It.*

In his attempts at successful comic-character drawing Lyly made an important advance. He shows certainly in some plays the excessive influence of Terence, but he frequently shakes himself free from the presentation of merely imitative 'humours.' There is no question but that in Dromio of *Mother Bombie,* in Stellio, Accidius, and Silena we have relics of the Latin stage, but none of these are quite pure types. Each has a certain touch of individuality that removes the apparent artificiality of the character-drawing. Moreover, we find in Lyly the first hints of the union of 'humours' with romantic characteristics, or of the juxtaposition of 'humours' and of romantic types. In *Mother Bombie* this is to be seen in the rather charming figures of Mæstius and Serena, just as it is to be discovered in the lovers, Eumenides and Semele, of *Endimion.*

In studying Lyly's work it is important to remember that while, to a certain extent, he stands apart from the regular development of drama in his time, his influence was widespread. All men and women of culture started to converse in euphuistic style, and the commoners aped the

aristocrats. His comedies proved popular, and Shakespeare, among others, deigned to take from them many suggestions. The device of the girl dressed as a boy, which gave to us the figure of Rosalind, is to be traced back to Lyly. The introduction of songs symbolical of the movement or mood of a particular comedy owes its popularity to him. In countless ways, large and small, he contributed to the development of the theatre of his time.[1]

(vii) Other Dramatists of the Late Sixteenth Century

In carrying the development of comedy and tragedy up to the close of the careers of the University Wits we have reached chronologically the nineties of the sixteenth century, and we have discovered certain main lines of dramatic development. In tragedy there has been noted (1) the Marlovian type, in which the hero is a superman, battling with the gods, (2) the *Spanish Tragedy* type of revenge play, and (3) the chronicle history of varying moods and atmospheres. With these moves the neo-classical tragedy, as exemplified in *Gorboduc,* but destined to take no large share in the growth of English drama, as well as odd plays, of which Peele's *David and Bethsabe* is one, with no very decided characteristics. In comedy we discover (1) the rude realistic farce deriving its inspiration from the interlude tradition, (2) the imitations of Terence and of Plautus, generally realistic in character, (3) the purely fanciful comedies written by Lyly, and (4) the romantic comedies of a realistic-ideal type inaugurated by Greene. These by no means exhaust all the forms of drama in the later years of the sixteenth century, but they may be

[1] It is important to remember that a true appreciation of Lyly's work cannot be gained until the principle of his stage methods is understood. Lyly, writing for the Court, adopted the 'simultaneous' method abandoned in the public theatres, whereby several distinct localities appeared on the stage at once. In *Mother Bombie,* for example, there are seven doors, each representing a separate locality. In *Campaspe* there are three localities on the stage—Alexander's house, Diogenes' tub, and Apelles' shop. This simultaneous setting was in use in the time of the mystery plays, and disappeared in England during the seventeenth century.

taken as guides in the further summary of tragic and comic endeavour.

In the meantime it may be well to glance briefly at a few independent plays, and at the work of one or two separate writers whose dramas are in some ways to be associated with the activities of the University Wits. One of the most important of these plays is *The Lamentable and True Tragedy of M. Arden of Feversham in Kent* (*c.* 1590; printed 1592), the authorship of which was at one time given to Shakespeare, but is now usually accredited to Kyd or to one of his followers. *Arden of Feversham* introduces us to a new type of tragedy, the domestic type. Domestic tragedy of a sort is, of course, visible in some of the moralities. The presentation of Everyman (under whatever name he may pass) is essentially domestic, and the example of these primitive dramas was no doubt fostered by the popular nature of the English theatre and by the influence of Marlowe. The moving from royal themes to the world of ordinary life was indeed inevitable for the English stage, divorced in spirit from the fettering restraint of classical rules and precepts. *Arden of Feversham,* however, marks the first direct break with tradition, and that break takes two distinct lines. In the first place, there is a good deal of prose mingled with its blank verse, and the verse itself is as close to prose as the author could bring it. The whole atmosphere of the play, therefore, even apart from the realistic theme, is brought down from the loftier realms of the earlier tragedy. The theme itself is the second important feature. We are here presented not with a story of revenge carried on in the Courts of princes, not with the downfall of some imperial monarch, but with the somewhat sordid murder of a Mr Arden by his wife Alice. Nothing could have been more thoroughly shocking to an enthusiast for the classics, but we, looking back from the twentieth century, can see that herein lay one of the opportunities which the English drama had of freeing itself from external bonds, and of elaborating a perfectly novel type of tragic endeavour.

The work of one or two particular dramatists may also

be considered here, and first that of Anthony Munday (*c.* 1553–1633), a peculiarly shadowy figure, who is slowly coming to his own. Very little of his work is known, yet Meres in 1598 styled him one of "the best for comedy" and considered him "our best plotter." It is almost certain that his influence may be traced in many works which now pass under the names of others. Of his extant plays we have three in all: *John a Kent and John a Cumber* (manuscript with date "Decembris 1596," but performed *c.* 1594), *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntingdon* (1598; printed 1601), and *The Death of Robert, Earle of Huntingdon* (1598; printed 1601; written with Chettle). In addition to these we know that he had a share in writing *Sir Thomas More,* and two plays—*Fedele and Fortunio* (*c.* 1584; printed 1585) and *The Weakest goeth to the Wall* (*c.* 1599; printed 1600)—have, the first with some evidence, the latter almost certainly erroneously, been attributed to him. The chief feature in the three known plays is the romantic atmosphere, and this has led certain modern critics to give to Munday probably more than his due share of praise as a forerunner of Shakespeare. *John a Kent* is indeed an interesting drama, presenting as it does a theme very similar to that given by Greene in *Friar Bacon,* and filled with the same romantic colouring. The two magicians, as in Greene's play, work for the loves of Sidanen and Marian, and this is intermingled with low-comedy episodes, in which appear one "Turnop with his Crewe of Clownes" not unsuggestive of Bottom and the artisans of *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* The two parts of *Robert, Earl of Huntingdon* display the same passion for romance, and here we come to an interesting fusion of history and folklore. The endeavour to provide an historical background for the Robin Hood legends is of importance, and no doubt gave several ideas to Shakespeare when he came to write his history-comedies. With these plays might be noted two of a similar tone and atmosphere, *A Pleasant Conceyted Comedie of George a Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield* (*c.* 1592; printed 1599), and *A Pleasant Commodie, Called Looke aboute You* (*c.* 1598; printed 1600). The first of these has been

attributed to Greene, but it is more probable that some episodes in the play were based on that dramatist's life. The comedy is not well constructed, and verges, as do many plays of the romantic type, upon the sentimental; but the introduction of folk-elements with the characters of Robin Hood, Maid Marian, and George a Greene gives it a lasting interest. From the difference in style between the Robin Hood and the Earl of Kendal portions it seems as if a primitive Robin Hood play had here been worked up with pseudo-historical material and the utilization of some gossip concerning the University Wit. *Look about You* shows a similar mingling of history and folklore, with an additional element of realism. In many diverse ways the path was being opened up for Shakespeare.

With Munday is to be associated Henry Chettle, who, like his companion, wrote many plays (most of them now lost) in collaboration with others for old Henslowe. The only play of his own which has been preserved is *The Tragedy of Hoffman or A Reuenge for a Father* (*c.* 1602; printed 1631). This tragedy is well written, many of the scenes being couched in a vivid dialogue hard to forget, but the heaping of murder upon murder prevents the play rising above melodrama. The conception of Hoffman, however, ferociously intent upon executing wild vengeance on the slayers of his father, and himself brought to ruin by the ἁμαρτία of his love for Otho's mother, shows that Chettle had some idea of the true nature of tragedy. A somewhat similar tragedy is that of *Alphonsus Emperour of Germany*, not printed till 1654, but probably dating back to the nineties of the sixteenth century. On the title-page of the only quarto it is attributed to Chapman, but this most modern critics are inclined to reject; the Stationers' Register entry of 1653 gives it to one John Peele, and probably because of this Kirkman ascribed it to George Peele. The drama shows well the crude revenge motives beloved by the audiences of the time, added to pseudo-historical interest. Alphonsus is a monster of vice. In the first scene he poisons his Machiavellian secretary, Lorenzo de Cyprus, and hints to the latter's son, Alexander, that the

true murderers are to be sought in the Electors of the German Empire. By this means he uses the youth as a tool to further his projects. An attempt on the life of Richard, Duke of Cornwall, fails, but the King of Bohemia is successfully poisoned. Hedewick, the daughter of the Duke of Saxon, and the bride of Edward, Prince of Wales, is ravished; her father stabs her, believing her unfaithful. One after another the enemies fall, until in the end Alphonsus in a moment of fear confesses his crimes to Alexander. The latter makes him deny God and then stabs him to the heart. Here the elements of the horror tragedy are intermingled with the revenge themes popularized by Kyd.[1]

The work of the other writers of this time may for the most part be neglected. William Haughton, John Day, Henry Porter, Robert Wilson, and Samuel Rowley all left capably written dramas behind them; but none set his seal upon the dramatic activity of the age. *English-Men for my Money: or, A pleasant Comedy, called, A Woman will haue her Will* (1598; printed 1616), by the first named, is a bright comedy of realistic tendencies, and the same author's *Grim the Collier of Croyden; Or, The Devil and his Dame* (1600; printed 1662 as by "I. T.") is a variant of the usual mixtures of realism, history, romance, and magic. Even more intrinsically interesting than these is Day's *Humour out of Breath* (1608): here the character of Florimel gives life to a plot of the romantic type and recalls once more the witty maidens of Shakespeare's fancy. Day's work extends well into the seventeenth century; but Henry Porter's only extant play, *The Pleasant Historie of the two angrie women of Abington* (*c.* 1597; printed 1599), is of the period we are discussing. This comedy has decided value because of the intense realism of the subject, and shows Porter in one way a predecessor of Jonson in the realm of satiric comedy. Robert Wilson belongs to an older and a different tradition. His *right excellent and famous Comœdy called the three Ladies of London* (*c.* 1581; printed 1584) and *The Pleasant and Stately Morall, of the*

[1] This play is interesting also because of the fact that many scenes are written in quite passable German.

three Lordes and three Ladies of London (*c.* 1589; printed 1590) are quite clearly based on the older morality tradition, and the realistic humour in them is but a further elaboration of similar realistic scenes in the early sixteenth-century plays we have already glanced at. Samuel Rowley is a more shadowy figure still. His one independent play is *When you see me, You know me. Or the famous Chronicle Historie of King Henry the eight* (*c.* 1603; printed 1605), but we are aware of his additions to *Dr Faustus,* and his authorship of several later plays is known from records of Sir Henry Herbert. The strength and virility of his acknowledged work is remarkable; and from this Mr H. Dugdale Sykes has argued that Rowley is the main author of *The Famous Victories,* of the prose scenes in *The Taming of A Shrew,* of certain passages in *Orlando Furioso* and others in *Wily Beguiled.* The correspondence between mannerisms to be found in these plays renders the attribution to Rowley highly probable.[1]

Many lesser plays have here been deliberately omitted. An outline history such as this cannot hope to do more than mention broad tendencies with a few selected concrete examples; and enough has been said perhaps to show the chief lines upon which drama was developing in the last years of the sixteenth century. The audience was manly, heroic, and broadminded; and accordingly we find the development of hardier features than are to be discovered in the later drama. At the same time, crudity in the presentment of tragic themes and vulgarity in many of the comic episodes existed by the side of high thinking and of beautiful romantic poetry. A thoroughly popular theatre will always produce these mingled elements of rich artistry and of roughness; there will always be in such a theatre a certain lack of refinement. On the other hand, there will usually be strength and hope and courage; there will be the freshness arising from breadth of outlook and of appeal. It must be our object in the following chapter to trace the rise of this early drama to a culmination in the

[1] For a criticism of Mr. Sykes' theory see W. W. Greg's *Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements* (1922), pp. 358–60.

hands of Shakespeare, and then to watch the gradual decline of the manlier elements as Court corruption laid its palsied hand upon the keen virility of the sixteenth-century theatre. In doing this, it will be necessary, first of all, to glance at the historical conditions governing the playhouses, and then to follow the fortunes of several of the most notable dramatic types. The analysis of seventeenth-century theatrical endeavour under the works of particular writers can end only in a certain confusion, for convention ruled, and the independence of the earlier drama soon gave way to a set of more or less stereotyped fashions in the theatres.

PART II

THE ELIZABETHAN, JACOBEAN, AND CAROLINE DRAMA

CHAPTER I

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERIOD THE AUDIENCES AND THE THEATRES

Historical Survey

THE seventeenth century, with the earlier portion of which this chapter will deal, is possibly the most marvellous epoch England has ever witnessed. There is Anglo-Saxon literature from the seventh to the tenth centuries. There are Chaucer and Langland and the unidentified author of *Gawayn and the Green Knight* in the fourteenth. There are Spenser and the University Wits in the sixteenth. All of these are of great intrinsic importance; but no one single century has seen such a florescence of artistic genius as appears in the works of Shakespeare, Chapman, Dekker, Jonson, Massinger, Middleton, Webster, Ford, and Shirley, to mention only a few of those who made the theatre glorious from 1600 to 1642. Hardly any century, moreover, displays such a variety of diverse moods and tendencies. This period which stretches from the last days of Elizabeth to the time of William and Mary shows not only the best work of Shakespeare and his companions, but also the tremendous glory of the Miltonic blank verse and the gradual chastening of poetry and of prose which reached a culmination in the works of Dryden. It starts in the full flush of romantic enthusiasm and closes with the establishment of correct and careful neo-classicism. At one end it knew Shakespeare; at the other it knew Swift.

Between Shakespeare and Swift is a deep chasm, at first

sight apparently without a solitary point of connexion between the one bank and the other. On closer view, however, it is seen that this chasm is bridged by innumerable links in a continued chain of development. There is, certainly, a chronological break toward the middle of the century in the Puritan domination, which extended from 1642 to 1660. Nevertheless, even this chronological break, serious as it appears, will be found to have exercised comparatively slight influence on the development of literature. There are Puritan elements to be discovered in the early Caroline drama, just as there are Cavalier elements to be traced in the Puritanism of Milton. Too strict an attention to chronology, indeed, may well lead toward a false conception of seventeenth-century literature, particularly of literature expressed through the medium of drama. A true realization of the development of artistic purposes in this epoch can be obtained only when the more precise data supplied by an historical study of the period are put aside, and tendencies, movements, modes of thought, are put in their stead. Perhaps no better method of delineating these tendencies and movements could be found than that which may be called the division by temperament. If we take the Elizabethan spirit, as exemplified in the works and lives of Spenser, Sidney, Raleigh, Drake, and Shakespeare, as an entity by itself, we find that the Cavalier spirit expressed by Fletcher and Ford and Shirley is no less independent, and that the differences between the two serve to provide a point of view from which we may regard the literary activity of each. The Puritan temperament follows, shown clearly in Milton's later works and in Marvell's; and that is succeeded by the temperament of the Restoration, seen markedly enough in Rochester's lyrics and Etherege's comedies, and itself leading by infinite gradations toward the Augustan or neo-classic mood of slightly later years. Not one of these temperamental elements is confined to a certain set of years, but if we take these as guides we shall find that by their aid we shall be able to classify almost all, if not quite all, the writers and thinkers of the time.

The seventeenth century opened with the last years of

Elizabeth's reign. She had unified England. She had made her country one of the chief of European nations, the colossal defeat of the Armada having for that time dissipated fear of any foreign invasion of our shores. She had made herself, moreover, the head of a national Church. Her rule, if strict against Catholics and Puritans who were in any way adverse to her system of government, was, it may be said, accepted by all. She was vain; she was artificial; but she was a diplomat, and she was the symbol of England. The poets who sang to her those praises which she so loved to hear were in reality singing the praises of Albion.

Elizabeth died in 1603, and James VI of Scotland hurried down to accept her throne, altering his title to James I. He was thoroughly unlike the preceding monarch, and in his reign there developed certain tendencies, partly due to his own management of State affairs, which were destined to be of extreme consequence before many decades had passed. The first and most important concerned the question of divine right. Elizabeth had been supreme, but she had always known when to give way. James assumed her place with far more exalted ideas of kingly power, bringing from Scotland all that fantastic philosophy which concerned the rights of kinghood and which was destined to bring more than one monarch of the house of Stuart to an untimely end. James, however, was almost the last person in the world fitted to keep up this *rôle* of flawless divinity. He had been gifted by nature with a clever but muddling brain. He was by way of being a pedant, acute and yet intensely foolish. Without real ability in kingship, without courage, without imperial grace, he tried to work with his wits to consolidate and establish that position for which he yearned. With him, then, in England grew up this new doctrine that kings could do no ill; with him too grew up that courtly body of men, less independent than the Drakes and Raleighs of a former period, who were to become the Cavaliers of the age of Charles I. With James's abrupt cessation from all foreign wars the broad free air that had informed the life and literature of

Elizabeth's reign began to vanish. Literature and life grew artificial, courtly, more luxuriant, more immoral, more insidious, and yet, in their own way, more gorgeous. The bare simplicity and noble tone of the Shakespearian tragedy degenerated into the florid beauties of Webster and Ford; the charm of *As You Like It* sank into the heated atmosphere of *A King and No King.*

In all history reactions are inevitably to be traced when any marked philosophy of life or tendency of government makes its appearance, and the reaction to this new spirit is to be seen in the rise of democratic Puritan sentiment. The Commons had been restive in Elizabeth's time, and this restiveness had nearly broken out into active rebellion in the year 1601. Only Elizabeth's diplomacy had, on that occasion, saved the country from disruption. In James's reign the dissatisfaction on the part of the Puritans became much more intense. They regarded his theory of the divine right of kings as a direct attack upon their political liberty. They looked with undisguised abhorrence upon his High Church ideas, seeing in them tendencies inimical to the reformed religion. They despised his Court as a place of infamy, alien to all good morals. The absence of foreign wars fostered internal dissension; more and more men turned to the question of domestic politics, so that, as we watch the progress of history immediately after the old Queen's death, we can see the rift gradually widening—the Puritans becoming increasingly severe, the Court rioting it in gayer splendour, in more wanton festivities, in more ornate religion.

James was just sufficiently clever and died just sufficiently soon to avoid any serious trouble with his subjects; but he left a serious legacy to his son, Charles. The latter, wholly unlike his father, was a gentleman, handsome, debonair, and artistically inclined. More and more he strengthened the Cavalier tradition, gathering round himself men of similar temperaments and kindred aspirations. In spite of his divine-right theories, his religion, and his artistic leanings he might well have made an ideal king for the moment. It is highly possible that, but for one

failing, his manners and his appearance would have won the hearts of all but the most soured Puritans. That one failing proved his utter undoing. He was completely unscrupulous in regard to political matters, and when we add this to the facts that his queen was a Catholic and that he himself was lenient to Catholics we realize that the struggle which had been slowly becoming more and more bitter in the time of James was bound to break out in deadly earnest. All through his reign he struggled, committing mad and perfidious act after mad and perfidious act. In Wentworth and in Laud he surrounded himself with evil counsellors, alienating thus even those men who would otherwise have served him to the death. He struggled in Ireland, with apparent success at first, but eventually with complete and abject failure. He struggled in Scotland, raising there a hornet's nest which was doomed to bring about his ruin. By 1642 the tide was full; the Civil War broke out, bringing victory to the Puritans; in 1649 Charles himself went to the scaffold. The Puritan *régime* meant a rule of iron in England. The playhouses were officially closed. All sort of merriment ceased. The wan, steel-set faces of the Commonwealthmen turned from all gaiety, innocent and sinful, as a snare of the Evil One. The spirit of 'Merrie England,' however, could never be stifled in this wise, and murmurs of discontent are to be heard even before the death of Oliver Cromwell, so that it was but natural that the reaction to the reaction should appear in the short-lived rule of his son, Richard.

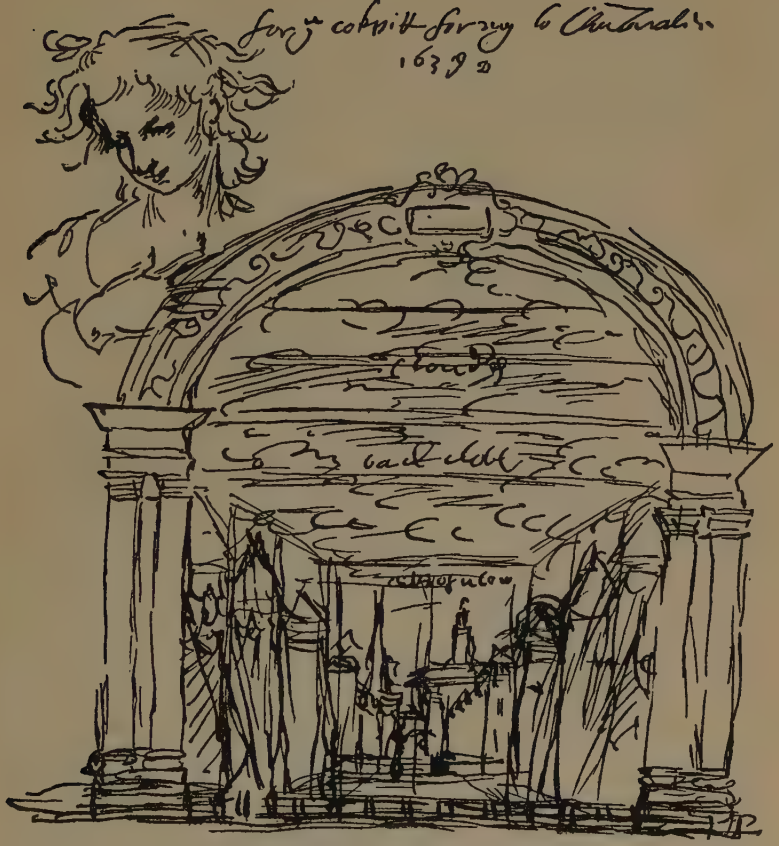
Charles II was recalled. For all those years he had been living, an exile, with his devoted band of Cavaliers. From one country to another he had passed in idleness, wasting his energies in drunkenness and wanton festivity. With his return the reaction to Puritan severity met with the abandon of these travelled Cavaliers, and all licence was permitted. The playhouses were thrown open; immorality was opposed to the morality of the preceding years; gaiety took the place of sadness and solemnity; careless abandon was substituted for restraint. The Restoration temperament, if so it may be called, endured for many

years. With the Revolution of 1688 and the gradual consolidation of anti-Catholic power there came toward the end of the seventeenth-century a certain change, manifested in life by a conventional morality and a soberness of demeanour, in literature by the forging of neo-classic precept and example.

So the tale goes on, movement succeeding movement, and reaction succeeding reaction. This rapid survey of the historical background against which the literature is revealed may help to throw into relief not only the main elements going to make up the separate moods of the time, but also the continuity of tradition, a continuity of tradition which, in spite of all classifications, must be observed in the drama of the period. One example here may be sufficient. Beaumont the Elizabethan joins with Fletcher the Cavalier, and between them they invent a new romantic drama, itself based on Shakespeare's earlier romantic comedies. Shakespeare is influenced and writes *Cymbeline, The Tempest,* and *The Winter's Tale.* Shirley a decade or so later feels the impress of the fresh style, and along with Shirley stands D'Avenant. D'Avenant becomes one of the chief figures in the development of early Restoration drama and hands on the tradition to Dryden and to the Earl of Orrery, with whom the romantic drama takes form as the heroic tragedy. This heroic tragedy mingles with the later blank-verse tragedy of 1679–1700 and is carried on into the eighteenth century. Thus are the movements of the time to be traced.

(ii) The Theatre

Before coming to an actual examination of the plays of the period covered by the years 1600 to 1642 it is necessary, in addition to the brief summary of the historical background, to make an analysis of the main tendencies in the theatre and the audience. It is impossible, of course, to assume the existence of one set form of theatre or of one established type of audience during these forty years; on the contrary, it is necessary here to trace the changes which



Photograph by the Victoria and Albert Museum

DESIGN BY INIGO JONES FOR HABINGTON'S
"THE QUEEN OF ARRAGON"

became gradually operative within the reigns of James and of Charles. The theatre of Elizabeth's days was, as has been shown, a theatre of the people. Men and women of all classes flocked to it, and as a consequence the dramatists had to please both the nobility and the humbler citizens. There was a resultant catholicity of appeal in the plays of that time, added to a genuine healthiness of tone, a broader vision, and a rich, bombastic, poetic utterance. At the same time, coarseness and occasional vulgarity are to be found in the dramas of the age, as well as a lack of unity in conception. The sixteenth century could give birth to the idyllic charm of *As You Like It* and to the crudest farce, to the rich bombast of *Tamburlaine* and to *Titus Andronicus,* to the cheap vaudeville puns of *Romeo and Juliet* and to the lyrical passion which informs almost the whole of that tragedy.

In the early seventeenth century a well-marked change, or series of changes, becomes evident in the theatre. Fundamentally the actual playhouses remained as before with the platform stage and the many medieval conventions which the Burbages and the Alleyns had inherited from the mysteries and the moralities. Most of the principal theatres were built on the plan of the Globe, open to the sky and plainly square or circular, but alongside of these 'public' theatres there were springing up more and more of the 'private' type, generally rectangular, with roofs and artificial lighting. These 'private' theatres, which before had been in the hands of boy-companies, came to be used by the regular players and led the way toward the introduction of the more modern type of stage made popular in the reign of Charles II. It is obvious that in these closed-in playhouses, even in spite of the platform stage, scenery and primitive lighting effects could be introduced, and we may presume that the great developments made by Inigo Jones in the settings of the Court masques were bound to find reflection in the 'public' theatres. It is certainly symbolic that the first clear references to the use of scenery in the theatres appear during the last years of Charles' reign and that these are

confined to the 'private' type of playhouse. Thus in 1637 Sir John Suckling provides suits and scenes to the value of £300 for a production of his *Aglaura* at Blackfriars; the same year Nabbes' *Microcosmus* was performed at Salisbury Court with scenery specially supplied; and three years later, in 1640, the then Lord Chamberlain defrayed the cost of the costumes and scenes for Habington's *The Queene of Arragon,* presented at Blackfriars. This tendency toward the greater use of the 'private' theatre and the corresponding tendency toward the utilization of scenery must be taken into account when we study the dramatic activity of the period.

Perhaps, too, we can trace an even greater employment of stage spectacle than was apparent in sixteenth-century dramas. Dumb shows, processions, and suchlike had been well favoured in the days of the University Wits, but they become even commoner in the seventeenth century. In Massinger and Dekker's *The Virgin Martyr* Sempronius enters "at the head of the Guard, soldiers leading three Kings bound." [1] A stage direction in Act II, Scene 1, of Massinger's *The Fatal Dowry* reads "Solemn Music. Enter the Funeral Procession," and in Act II, Scene 3, of the same play we find "Hautboys. Here a passage over the stage, while the Act is playing for the marriage of *Charalois* with *Beaumelle.*" Middleton's *The Mayor of Quinborough* has many dumb shows, as has even such a comedy as Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West.* So frequent did these become that the prologue to the latter's *The English Traveller* declares that play to be strange because there was

> *No Drum, nor Trumpet, nor Dumbe show;*
> *No Combate, Marriage, not so much to day*
> *As Song, Dance, Masque, to bumbaste out a Play.*

These dumb shows, of course, as in *The Fair Maid of the West,* were utilized to explain dramatic events too lengthy or too tedious to put on the stage. For this purpose, too, the old Chorus, which Shakespeare had employed,

[1] Act I, Scene 1.

CXXX.

Ludas Scenicus.



A Stage-Play.

In

was made use of, as in *The Mayor of Quinborough* or as in *The Fair Maid of the West,* where Heywood apologizes:

> Our Stage so lamely can expresse a Sea,
> That we are forst by *Chorus* to discourse
> What should have beene in action.

The old tricks of the stage remained almost unchanged. Plays within plays were of frequent occurrence, sometimes, as in Middleton and Rowley's *The Spanish Gipsy,* not with great dramatic propriety, sometimes, as in Massinger's *The Roman Actor,* with exquisite effect. The example of *Hamlet* had itself been borrowed from an older tradition and aided in popularizing the convention. So, too, the old device of a girl dressed as a boy still held the boards. Still the actors all were men or boys,[1] and this device may have made easier the task of the youths who took women's parts. Shakespeare had abandoned the frequent use of this stage trick by 1600,[2] but others took it from him and carried forward its popularity. In three ways certain modifications of this particular device show the tendencies of the time. It aided in the first place toward the introduction of scenes of an indelicate character, foreign to the charm of *As You Like It.* Secondly, it helped toward pathetic situation, as in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy,* where Aspatia dresses as a boy and allows herself to be killed by the lover who had rejected her. Thirdly, it assisted the dramatists in their constant search after novelty and complication of plot. Middleton's *The Widow* is a good example of this. Here Martia appears in boy's clothes. As a boy she excites the passions of Philippa, who, in order to hide this youth from her husband, re-dresses Martia as a girl. Still further to cheat her husband she permits Martia to go through a ceremony of marriage with Francisco. In the end the girl's identity is revealed. In a similar manner, the 2nd Luce in Heywood's *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon* is paired off with Young Chartley. Immorality or indelicacy, pathos, and the straining after

[1] French actresses made an appearance in London about 1625, but were hissed out of the town.

[2] It appears, of course, in *Cymbeline.*

novelty will be found to be three of the chief characteristics of Jacobean and Caroline literature.

The theatre, however, does not display to us so clearly the changes that were coming over the age as does the audience. Gradually, year after year, the playhouses became the haunts of the courtiers. With the rift that was ever widening between the followers of the King and the Puritans, the former indulged in still greater amusement, the latter refrained from those things patronized by the Cavaliers. Steadily the citizens left off attending the theatre, so that the audiences were made up mainly of the courtiers and Cavaliers, along with a sprinkling of the riff-raff of men and women who won their livelihood by pleasure and gambling. No longer did the theatre express the feelings of the people of England; it was rapidly becoming the exclusive property of an aristocratic clique. The dramatists found as year succeeded year that they had to write for a new taste; more and more they looked to the Court.

(iii) The Reflection of Contemporary Conditions in the Drama

This new taste and its consequent effects upon the dramatic literature of the time had various results, and it may be well here to summarize briefly such as seem to be most exemplified in the typical dramas of the early seventeenth century.

We note, first of all, a certain new criticism, a more refined judgment of dramatic methods, leading ultimately toward a better technique. After 1600 the old chronicle history disappears. A few writers, such as Shakespeare, who had been brought up on the older traditions, might still retain some of its forms, but fundamentally it was replaced by something new. It cannot be regarded as a mere coincidence that Ben Jonson with his neo-classicism made his appearance just on the brink of the new century. His style, independent and individual as it seems, was in accord with the spirit of the age. In comedy Spanish intrigue, with the complicated plots always associated with

that dramatic *genre,* led to a more elaborate and skilful structure. In tragedy very little that was so amorphous as *The Spanish Tragedy* or as *Tamburlaine* was written by the dramatists. Even Shakespeare, who in *Antony and Cleopatra* and in *King Lear* showed his indebtedness to former styles, displayed in *Othello* a very model of fine technique. Some of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays may appear to be carelessly constructed, but in the main their tragedies and comedies, however lacking they may be in deeper thought and higher purpose, are seen to be built on well-established lines. Massinger has a skill in construction that is well-nigh marvellous. Obviously the most difficult part of a play is the exposition, and it is in the more skilful expositions of seventeenth-century dramas that we note most clearly the growing power of the playwrights. Middleton and Rowley's *The Spanish Gipsy* is as typical as any, with its nervous opening dialogue bringing the audience at once into the very midst of the plot. Or else one might take Middleton's *Women Beware Women,* and observe the subtly conceived conversation carried on by Leantio, Bianca, and the Mother, conversation carefully designed to introduce the spectator to the action of the piece. Very rarely do we discover the hopelessly artificial first scenes of many of the earlier tragedies and comedies.

Against this more correct taste must be placed a tendency in the audience which led toward a weak dramatic close. These new courtiers who made up the bulk of the audience were more enervated than their predecessors had been, and accordingly, in tragedy especially, they had to be kept stimulated by a continual series of thrilling events. It is perfectly true that horror elements make their due appearance among the plays of the University Wits. The danger of generalization is shown by the fact that Professor Schücking accepts these horror elements as distinctively a characteristic of the earlier drama,[1] but there is, it seems, a difference between such elements as introduced in the sixteenth-century tragedies and similar elements in seventeenth-century plays. The earlier Elizabethans could heap

[1] *Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays* (1923).

horror upon horror in the best approved manner, so that a tragedy like *Titus Andronicus* became one long tale of horror and torment; but in the seventeenth century we note an increased love of thrills, not necessarily throughout the whole play, but in stress-positions within the play. Thus many of the dramatists seemed to find a difficulty over their last acts. Commonly in their dramas a great crisis comes at the end of Act IV, only to be paralleled by another at the close of the drama. In Fletcher's *Valentinian* Æcius and Pontius commit suicide at the end of Act IV, Valentinian is poisoned in Act V, Scene 2, and Maximius dies at the conclusion of the play. Massinger's *The Roman Actor* has the thrilling death of Paris at the close of Act IV and the death of Cæsar at the close of Act V. *The Virgin Martyr* of Massinger and Dekker shows us the murder of Calista and Christeta in the midst of Act III, the martyrdom of Dorothea and the death of Antoninus at the end of Act IV, the torture and death of Theophilus at the close of Act V. All through these plays the dramatists attempt to fire the audience with suspense; they construct their tragedies on the plan of a series of exciting episodes, and constantly employ theatrical devices, both good and bad, for the purpose of arousing attention. The horrors, the poisoned pictures, the drinking-cups made out of skulls, those devices made so familiar by Webster and Ford and Tourneur, are all manifestations of this aim. Fletcher's *Valentinian* and Heywood's *The Rape of Lucrece* are founded on abductions. Torture is presented on the stage in the first of these, as it is also in *The Virgin Martyr,* where Dorothea is beheaded *coram populo*. In Middleton's *The Witch* a wife is made by her husband to drink his health out of her father's skull.

Not always, however, did the spectators desire to go away with final horrors in their minds, and hence we find, alongside of this tragedy of torment, the arising of a peculiar form of tragi-comedy typical of this age. In this form of tragi-comedy torment and horror hover in the air, but are finally dispelled by an artificial close. *The Witch,* mentioned immediately above, is a marked instance of this. The ghastly fancies of the husband lead the wife to attempts

at murder. She thinks she has succeeded, but, finding that he is not dead, returns to his grace again. In the same author's *The Widow,* Francisco, going to commit adultery, is suddenly and artificially struck with repentance and retires. So in *The Spanish Gipsy,* by Middleton and Rowley, Roderigo, who has violated Clara, has a sudden attack of conscience and marries her. This weak tragi-comedy obviously generates false psychology and artificial construction. Its many evil influences must be carefully borne in mind while we note the improved technique of the seventeenth-century dramatists.

The debility which was thus creeping upon the age, exemplified by both the last-mentioned tendencies, is further apparent in the interest which dramatists and spectators took in themes of incest. Ford is probably the best-known playwright in this connexion, but he by no means stood alone. Middleton in *Women Beware Women* has written a particularly objectionable drama on these lines, while many plays, such as Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King,* treat the subject romantically. In the last-mentioned drama the audience is kept in suspense because of the love of the King, Arbaces, for his sister, Panthea. Tragedy is averted only when it is discovered that Arbaces is in reality not the true king and Panthea not his sister but the rightful queen. Love, particularly passionate and illicit love, has come to dominate the minds of the playwrights and of the audience; novelty is aimed at; and all means are taken to provide each drama with thrilling episodes, however artificial and unnatural they may be.

By the side of this degeneration of moral tone there is apparent in the audience of the seventeenth century an increasing love of pathos and of what may be called sentimentalism. Only a few writers of the period, such as Heywood in *The English Traveller,* can present beautiful pictures of upright honesty; the rest sink to carnal images and suggestive sensuality. A lowered moral tone, however, does not by any means signify an absence of sentimentalism. The richer sentimentalism of the eighteenth century grew

into being in the midst of a hard-drinking, sensual age, just as this of the seventeenth century rose alongside the illicit loves of the Fordian drama and the coarse imaginings of Killigrew. Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* is thus full of sentiment. Moll is made impossible, because the authors were striving to present a wholly idealized view of her character. The duel in Middleton and Rowley's *A Fair Quarrel* is exactly in the style of Steele a century later. The noble-minded bandits in Massinger's *The Guardian* remind us of the similarly magnanimous vagabonds of late eighteenth-century dramas of sensibility. This sentimentalism, be it noted, frequently takes two forms. In one way it may be regarded as the genuine attempt of the humaner dramatists to stem the current of immorality, callousness, and corruption; in another as the merest pandering to an audience intent upon novelty, and eager to accept anything which might serve to whet their jaded appetites. Along with sentimentalism always goes pathos, that strange emotion ever to be appreciated yet exceedingly difficult to define accurately. Pathos, it may be said, is the weaker form of the tragic. The latter is heroic, leaving in the heart something inexplicable that is above tears. Pathos is always tear-compelling, and arouses a mood weaker and less noble than that majesty and awe associated with the highest tragedy. It must, of course, be realized not only that there are two forms of pathos, but that pathos may play an important and vital part in the greatest forms of tragedy. The scene when Lear wakens to discover Cordelia bending over him is indescribably pathetic, yet the whole of *King Lear* breathes the spirit not of pathos, but of terrible majesty. The pathos in only too many Jacobean and Caroline dramas is spread over all the scenes and all the characters. The true form of pathos may, at times, come near to the highest tragic expression, as in Massinger and Field's *The Fatal Dowry* or in Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness,* but that form of the mood usually to be discovered in this period is the false and the artificial. The dramatists employ every means, illegitimate as well as legitimate, to stir the emotions of the spectators

and to present before them something of novelty. So we find the wholly false pity summoned forth by Ford and the painful attempts at pathetic situation made by Shirley and even by Webster. The old heroic atmosphere visible in *Othello* is hard to discover in the tragedies produced between 1610 and 1642.

With this debility goes a certain weakness in the power of characterization—another feature due to the desires of the spectators. More and more situation was being relied on rather than character, and the emphasis upon situation, added to the artificial changes of mood made necessary by the treatment of the dramas of the time, removed altogether the possibility of securing such finely developed individual figures as appear in earlier plays. In comedy Ben Jonson popularized the 'humours,' stock figures of no definite personality. In tragedy we meet with hardly anything save the regular, conventionalized stock types. The headstrong monarch is a favourite character of this sort, exemplified by Arbaces in Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* and by Dioclesian in Massinger and Dekker's *The Virgin Martyr*. The lustful tyrant is another; he appears in Fletcher's *Valentinian* and *The Maid's Tragedy,* and in Massinger's *The Roman Actor*. In these tragedies, too, there is always a predetermined hero, often a husband, and with him the inevitable heroine, either sinning or sinned against. As a foil and confidant to the former we are usually presented with a faithful friend, who is most commonly outspoken, blunt, and sincere. Mardonius in *A King and No King,* Romont in *The Fatal Dowry,* Aretus in *Valentinian,* and Melantius in *The Maid's Tragedy* are all characters drawn after this set plan. Add to this the sudden and wholly unpsychological revulsions of character which mar the majority of these dramas and we realize that there could be no possible delving into the depths of personality such as we find in Shakespeare.

So, too, with the themes of the plays themselves. Artificiality and novelty came rapidly to count for more than anything else. Comedy for a time was saved because of the realistic settings, but even those were being

conventionalized through the influence of Spanish intrigue. As for tragedy, we find that ever more and more romantic plots came to be employed. There was a regular run on Roman plays, usually set in the time of the Empire; and an equally popular run on tragedies the scenes of which were set in the Courts of Renascence Italy. More important are the plays where for locality is selected some wholly impossible Sicily or Moldavia or kingdom of the East. The audience loved those scenes, because they spoke of an idealized realm not far apart from Arcadia; strength being lost, they could not bear to witness the tragedy of daily life.

These spectators, bound up in their own affairs, naturally desired, to a far greater extent than the Elizabethans, the introduction of politics into the theatre. Many of the plays of the time contain references to current events and to contemporary conditions. Most of the dramatists were servile *divino jure* royalists, and they delighted to flood their dramas with the most loyal of sentiments. A few, such as Chapman and Massinger, preserve an independence of judgment, but the majority follow the lines set down by Beaumont and Fletcher. In *The Maid's Tragedy,* for example, Amintor, hopelessly betrayed and wronged by his king, feels that there is no possibility for him of revenge. The populace were ridiculed on all sides, so that the stage increasingly divorced itself from the only audience that can make for a great national theatre—the people. Even a man like Massinger, vigorous as was his criticism of contemporary affairs, succumbed to the usual theories. He presents Dioclesian in *The Virgin Martyr* as acting wrongly, just as he presents Roberto in *The Maid of Honour,* but only on the advice of his evil counsellors. Probably, with sharper vision than the others, he saw the way affairs were tending, and desired to warn Charles against the Wentworths and the Lauds. Still, for him a king was enhaloed with a divine glory, and the ideas of the commonalty were anathema.

This political element which is to be traced most clearly in tragedy is paralleled by the rapid growth of satire in comedy. In the years before 1600 comedy had been

boisterous, as in *The Taming of the Shrew,* or idyllic, as in *As You Like It.* After 1600 several circumstances tended to lead it in other directions. Poetical satire in the hands of Marston, Donne, and Guilpin taught men a medium which had been lost since Roman days; and the age was ripe for satire. A courtly age, an age when creative power is decaying, when civil abuses are rife, and when the audience or the reading public is confined to a small clique, will always produce satire. In 1598 appeared the first extant work of Ben Jonson, and Jonson's comedy is essentially satiric. Henceforth, comedy was to take two main lines of development—the one satiric, and the other purely romantic. The latter borrowed from tragedy a great deal of its spirit, and merged imperceptibly into the prevalent tragi-comedy. The former remained prevailingly realistic. Jonson's 'humours' are abstracts of the age, figures symbolizing this or that type of man, or this or that corruption of the time. Comedy thus poured scorn on the Puritans. It attacked the 'roarers' as in Middleton and Rowley's *A Fair Quarrel.* It hit out at the *nouveaux riches,* as in Massinger's *A City Madam.* It ridiculed the conceited fops, as in *The Maid of Honour;* the *milites gloriosi,* as in *Every Man in his Humour;* the University-bred fools, as in Heywood's *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon* and Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside.* Everywhere it spread its net to catch the follies and the vices of the time.

In this development of satire it was but to be expected that the dialogue of plays should become more natural and lifelike, and this tendency toward greater realism in language is a marked feature in almost all early seventeenth-century drama. In comedy the endeavour affected the scenes both for good and for evil. Obviously one of the readiest methods of securing the realistic effect was the introduction of slang terms and of barbarisms. Jonson used the "philosophical" cant in his *The Alchemist,* the cant of the Puritans in *Bartholomew Fair.* Middleton and Rowley's *A Fair Quarrel* has pages of "roaring words," and Dekker's portion of *The Roaring Girl* abounds in "Alsatian terms," the dialect of thieves, already used, though sparingly, by Shakespeare.

The result was a considerable brightening of comedy, for dialect of any sort is an unfailing tool in the hands of the lighter dramatists. On the other hand, the lengthy use of an unknown, or approximately unknown, dialect will inevitably become wearisome; and its effect, moreover, will disappear as the centuries pass by. There is something of this monotony in Jonson's plays, felt even in spite of the genius and vivacity of the author; and when we turn to other comedies by less talented writers we see that a vast number of them may be read now only by particular students of the period, and then not without the assistance of a body of explanatory notes. A complementary development is to be witnessed likewise in the verse of the more serious dramatists. Shakespeare's blank verse was always the blank verse of a poet. He was often obscure, always lyrical, always impassioned. In contrast to this type of dramatic dialogue, which Shakespeare shared with, or inherited from, the writers of the sixteenth century, we may place the blank verse of Fletcher and his companions. With the exception of a few writers, of whom Ford is the chief, we find that there are practically no dramatists of the later period who utilize this lyrical utterance. The Restoration critics were right when they declared that Beaumont and Fletcher wrote a courtly language—wrote, that is to say, as courtiers might speak. The verse of tragedy and of tragi-comedy lost its distinctively poetic rhythm. It abandoned, to employ Symonds' metaphor, the pitch of poetry. The consequence is that if we read the dialogue of any of these plays, we seem to be listening to the extremely elegant words of a fine speaker, not to the rhapsodies of a poet.

If we bear in mind these various aspects of early seventeenth-century drama we shall have gone far toward diagnosing the whole of the theatrical activity of the time. Individually diverse as the playwrights were, they formed, as Schlegel realized, a 'school,' so that the works of any one member of that school are much nearer to the works of any other member than to the works of a writer living before 1600 or after 1660.

(iv) The Main Types of Drama, 1600–42

Most of the chief tendencies of the dramatic literature of these forty years have been outlined above, but the scattered references may here be gathered together and summarized afresh. To this period belong the greatest works of Shakespeare's genius. His only true tragedy before 1600, if we except the history plays, was *Romeo and Juliet,* admittedly a youthful effort. Only after 1600 did he write *Hamlet, Lear, Othello,* and *Macbeth,* along with the series of Roman plays, *Julius Cæsar, Antony and Cleopatra,* and *Coriolanus.* The Shakespearian tragedy, therefore, must be accounted one of the principal forms within this period. It must, however, be recognized that Shakespeare was not followed directly by any other writer. Many caught echoes of his language; several copied his characters; a few boldly imitated scenes in his plays; but there was no one who captured the tremendous spirit of his efforts in tragedy. Shakespeare, after all, was an Elizabethan, and the age was passing beyond the mood of earlier times. The horror tragedy, particularly of the more decadent type, thrilled the audience, and tragi-comedy came with its world of impossible romance to charm weaker minds and weaker eyes. These are the typical *genres* of serious drama during this epoch. As if in opposition to them, on the other hand, are the many tentative experiments in domestic drama. *Arden of Feversham* led the way, and Heywood gave the seal of artistic perfection to the type in *The English Traveller* and *A Woman Killed with Kindness.* The domestic drama, however, was never very popular, and died away until it was revived again in the eighteenth century.

In comedy similar movements are traceable. The tragi-comedy of a romantic cast had its unquestionable influence on the minds of the comic dramatists, and Spanish intrigue came to usurp more and more attention. The Spanish drama was magnificently fitted to appeal to the ages of James and of Charles. Under Lope de Vega and Calderon it had won a supreme place in the world of art.

More and more the Court was looking to Spain, as the old feeling which had risen to white heat in the days of the Armada passed away. The Spanish comic theatre was distinguished by three characteristics: the romantic tone which frequently enveloped the more serious scenes; the insistence upon intrigue, or action, at the expense of the characters; and the air of aristocratic gallantry engendered in a strictly monarchist country amid conventions of a late stage of civilization. All three appealed to the English playwrights and spectators. Here they found the courtly air, the atmosphere of assignations and intrigues, the slight colouring of romantic sentiment, for which they pined. With Fletcher the Iberian comedy was popularized in England, and was destined to run its course well into the eighteenth century. The comedy of intrigue was sometimes realistic in character, more commonly of a fashionable artificiality. Realism was more definitely encouraged by Ben Jonson, who, with his comedy of humours, endeavoured to establish more correct standards in the London theatres. In many ways this realistic comedy may be related to the domestic tragedy of the *Arden of Feversham* type, for both aided in keeping some measure of common sense in the theatre. Romanticism and intrigue were rapidly leading toward exaggeration of effect and artificiality of psychological delineation; the realist movement did at least keep the eyes of the dramatists intent upon contemporary London and its characters.

Besides these main theatrical traditions, which constantly mingle one with another, there are, of course, to be traced many other peculiar forms of drama which may hardly be classified into distinct groups. The revenge play, as developed by Kyd in *The Spanish Tragedy,* had a successful career in the seventeenth century, but may be considered along with the horror tragedy. Several serious dramas by Massinger seem to stand in a class by themselves. Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* marks the development of a new form, the dramatic burlesque. A few attempts were made at classical tragedy. A minute examination of these independent plays will serve

to show the immense variety in the theatrical activity of the period; but for our purposes in this volume, in order to gain, as it were, a bird's-eye view of the chief developments in the drama from mystery play to modern tragedy and comedy, it is necessary to bear in mind the larger and more outstanding dramatic tendencies of the age.

CHAPTER II

ROMANTIC COMEDY AND ROMANTIC TRAGI-COMEDY

The Romantic Comedy of Shakespeare

OUR analysis of the development of drama has already covered the work of the interlude writers and of the University Wits. Chronologically this survey has carried us to the end of the sixteenth century, but so far nothing has been said of Shakespeare's endeavour in the world of dramatic art. It is imperative now to return to the eighties and nineties, when Marlowe, Greene, and Kyd flourished, in order to view the dramatic work of Shakespeare in those years.

The career of Shakespeare is so well known, so much attention has been paid to his own life and to the circumstances in which his plays were written, that little space need be taken here with mere matters of fact. His dramatic work started, as all critics are agreed, with *Love's Labour's Lost,* and from the date when this was produced up to 1600 he had written over half of his extant works. Of these dramas several are histories, some of this type being purely tragically conducted, as *Richard II* and *Richard III,* some mainly comically, as *Henry IV.* There is, besides, the single lyrical tragedy of his early years, *Romeo and Juliet,* one or two farcical or realistic comedies, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* and, finally, the array of romantic comedies, including *The Two Gentlemen of Verona, A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like it, Twelfth Night, Much Ado about Nothing,* and *The Merchant of Venice.* It is with the last group that we are concerned here. In writing these he was obviously influenced deeply by Peele, Greene, and Lyly. The precociousness of *Love's Labour's Lost* shows clearly the influence of the last; Rosalind is a child of Greene's

imagination as well as of Shakespeare's. The blank verse of all the dramas re-echoes melodies already devised by his University predecessors and contemporaries. There was no exaggeration in the accusation that the young Stratford actor was beautifying himself with their feathers.

All these comedies are bound together by a common bond of romantic treatment. Characters and scenes alike are viewed through magic casements which transform reality. The settings are all imaginative—an unhistorical France, Ephesus, Thebes, Arden, Illyria, and Venice—each one conceived in the glow of a strange and beautiful fancy. Yet all are related to real life. There are contemporary figures and contemporary fashions in *Love's Labour's Lost;* Bottom and his companions mingle with the fairies; Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek are companions of Viola and Olivia, Dogberry and Verges of Hero and Beatrice. This is the cardinal characteristic of Shakespeare's romantic world—the union of realism and fantasy. Any other writer, placing Titania and Bottom in such close juxtaposition, might well have failed to secure unity of form, and our purpose in analysing these romantic comedies must be to discover that secret whereby Shakespeare was enabled to introduce such apparently conflicting characters. This secret is to be discovered, it would seem, in that particular form of humour which dominates these plays as well as the more riotously comic *Henry IV.* This humour, a union of intellect and emotion, irradiates both the character and the scene, making romantic the ordinary things of life and making realistic the most imaginative and improbable characters and events.[1] Through it the Forest of Arden becomes for us as actual as Epping Forest; through it Bottom is seen revealed in a halo of imagination which makes him a fit companion for the delicate faïry queen.

As we trace Shakespeare's dramatic development in these plays we can watch this humour deepening in character, just as we can watch the gradual evolution of his dramatic power. *A Pleasant Conceited Comedie called Loues labors*

[1] On this quality of humour see Sully's *Essay on Laughter* or the present writer's *An Introduction to Dramatic Theory.*

lost (*c.* 1590–1; printed 1598) is a tyro's play. It is full of puns, of ridicule, of satire. The youthful country actor and poet, from the height of his inexperienced wisdom, looks down with amused contempt upon the exaggerated fashions of his time, upon the impossible academies which Italy was introducing all over Europe. *Love's Labour's Lost* is a clever play, but it is not great. Its structure is artificial and mechanical, much of its humour decidedly superficial.[1] *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (*c.* 1591; printed 1623) already strikes a deeper note. In Julia and Silvia we first meet that pair of heroines immortalized later in Rosalind and Celia, Portia and Nerissa, Hero and Beatrice. So similar do these pairs of girl figures seem that we are tempted to believe that at this time Shakespeare had in his company a couple of boy actors, one taller than the other, one more serious and dignified, the other more impertinent and vivacious. In studying Shakespeare's dramas we must always bear in mind the fact that this poet, independent of time and place as he may seem, was an actor in a particular company, intent on writing successful dramas and inevitably creating his characters with at least a slight thought of the particular players who were to impersonate them. In this comedy, too, we meet that pair of clownish servants, likewise with kindred characteristics, called here Launce and Speed, renamed later as Old Gobbo and Young Gobbo or Dogberry and Verges. Surely here once more Shakespeare was thinking of two comedians in his own troupe. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* shows great advance in characterization, but in structure it remains somewhat mechanical and artificial. Shakespeare so far has been able to secure in comedy neither depth nor organic unity. *A Midsommer nights dreame* (1594–5; printed 1600) introduces us to the richer development of Shakespeare's art. There is magnificent poetry here, wherein the author has got beyond the mere description of the earlier dramas and reaches a stage where imagination transforms the whole of the natural world.

[1] *Love's Labour's Lost* has been usually assigned to the years 1590–1 and regarded as Shakespeare's first play. Recent criticism, on the other hand, has tended to establish the date of production as 1593 or 1594.

> And neuer since the middle Summers spring
> Met we on hil, in dale, forrest, or mead,
> By paued fountaine, or by rushie brooke,
> Or in the beached margent of the sea. . . .

Passages such as this leave the meticulous enumeration of nature's beauties far behind. The profundity of this play is seen further in the development of a certain mystical or symbolic note which is ever apparent in the works of Shakespeare's maturity and which reaches its culmination in the famous address of Prospero toward the close of his career.

> These things seeme small & vndistinguishable,
> Like farre off mountaines turned into Clouds,

says Demetrius, and Hermia answers him:

> Me-thinks I see these things with parted eye,
> When euery things seemes double.

This note is intensified too in some of the last words of the play, where Theseus, commenting on Hippolyta's ridicule of the "Pyramus and Thisbe" playlet, utters what might be regarded as a veritable defence of all the romantic drama:

> The best in this kind are but shadowes, and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

Shakespeare's immense advance in stagecraft is fully to be witnessed in this play. The complicated plot with its subtle and careful unravelling displays that at last he has come to the maturity of his powers. Here he is no longer the tyro, but a master of his craft. This sense of power is to be traced in all the other romantic comedies. *As You Like It* (*c.* 1599–1600; printed 1623) shows it clearly. Taking his material from Lodge's *Rosalynde, or Euphues Golden Legacy,*[1] Shakespeare has here reached the summit of his purely romantic art. The story is well told, and the characters of Jaques, Rosalind, Celia, and Touchstone stand out, fully delineated, as even the persons of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* fail to do. The gentle melancholy of the piece, intensified by the only half-satiric presentation

[1] Published in 1590. It has been reprinted in the "Shakespeare Classics," a very useful series which provides material for the study of Shakespeare's sources.

of the professional melancholic in Jaques, added to the pastoral charm of the Forest of Arden scenes, has made this, and rightly, one of the most prized of Shakespeare's comedies. *Twelfe Night, Or what you will* (*c.* 1600; printed 1623), for the plot of which Shakespeare has gone to a tale told in the *Arcadia* with suggestions apparently from an Italian piece called *Gl' Ingannati* (1537), carries on the same tradition with, perhaps, a trifle more of hilarity and boisterous humour. Touchstone is called to life again in Feste, Rosalind and Celia in Viola and Olivia. The symbolic songs, such as "Blow, blow, thou winter wind," which had added to the charm of *As You Like It,* have here been reproduced in "O Mistress mine" and "Come away, come away, Death." The most salient features of *Twelfth Night,* however, are the character of Malvolio and the Sir Toby Belch scenes. Malvolio is a more finely drawn study than any of Shakespeare's previous romantic characters. His self-satisfied assurance, his ambition, his Puritanic contempt of others, are all held up to ridicule, yet so subtly is the caricature put before us, with such infinite humour and delicacy, that we feel somehow a bond of sympathy for the ill-used majordomo. What Shakespeare's own purpose was here, it is hard to determine, but for modern readers Malvolio holds a place very similar to that occupied by Shylock. Sir Toby Belch has a general family likeness to Falstaff, and in the hilarious drinking scene we are irresistibly reminded of adventures in the Boar's Head Tavern. Both are presented in the same way, with this general halo of romantic humour which envelops the drunkards and the roysterers even as it envelops the pathetic fooling of Touchstone and the charm of Hermia.

This quality of humour is seen nowhere more plainly than in the character of Falstaff. *The History of Henrie the Fourth; With the battel at Shrewsburie, betweene the King and Lord Henry Percy, surnamed Henrie Hotspur of the North. With the humorous conceits of Sir Iohn Falstalffe* (*c.* 1597; printed 1598 and 1599) is by no means a romantic comedy, but it may be dealt with here because of this common method of treatment. The delineation of

Falstaff reveals well the peculiar sympathy which is inherent in this mood of humour. Falstaff is a braggart, perhaps a coward, certainly a disreputable old sinner, yet there is hardly anyone who does not feel for him and sympathize with him. If we regard him in the cold light of reason we are bound to shun and to condemn him; but no audience ever could regard Falstaff in the cold light of reason because of this intangible sympathy which Shakespeare has transfused into his pages. The humour of the man is so broad; he, like the characters of the purely romantic comedies, can laugh not only at others, but at himself. His intellect is so acute, his sense of fun so highly developed, that we cannot but take him to our hearts. It is the fact that Shakespeare has presented Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* without this humour which makes the majority of readers feel that the latter is an immeasurably weaker and less interesting play.

The pure romantic comedies have been dealt with above, but there remain one or two other dramas related to them or belonging to the same class which must here be considered. *Much adoe about Nothing* (*c.* 1599; printed 1600), *All's Well, that Ends Well* (*c.* 1599; printed 1623); *The most excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice. With the extreame crueltie of Shylocke the Iewe towards the sayd Merchant, in cutting a iust pound of his flesh: and the obtayning of Portia by the choyse of three chests* (*c.* 1595; printed 1600), and *Measure, for Measure* (*c.* 1604; printed 1623) are all bound together by the fact that each one presents elements of a more depressing or tragic kind than are to be discovered in the earlier plays. There are serious happenings in the air both in *As You Like It* and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* but never for one moment do we doubt that all will come right in the end. *The Merchant of Venice* might well have ended as a tragedy. These four plays may be considered as leading the way toward the fuller romantic tragi-comedy of later years, although they are all nearer in form to *As you Like It* than to *The Winter's Tale.* The *Merchant of Venice,* the story of which Shakespeare took from *Il Pecorone* (the 'bond' tale), *Gesta Romanorum* (the

'casket' tale), and Masuccio (the 'Jessica' tale), although it is one of the most popular of Shakespeare's plays, presents the greatest number of critical problems. The clever interweaving of story with story has made it a success upon the stage, but that cannot blind us to the facts that it exhibits a strange lack of unity of tone and that Shylock himself is a figure more calculated for tragedy than for comedy. It is possibly Shakespeare's consciousness of this latter weakness that made him give to some scenes of the drama a more than usually romantic colouring. The whole story is incredible and fanciful. The choosing of the caskets is utter nonsense, and no one ever believes in Portia's masquerade and specious arguments. We are content to suffer a little "willing suspension of disbelief" when we witness *As You Like It,* but *The Merchant of Venice* is frankly impossible. This romantic colouring is intensified by the references to music. So numerous are these that one might well imagine the whole drama to be accompanied by various melodies.

> Let musicke sound while he doth make his choise,
> Then if he loose he makes a Swan-like end,
> Fading in musique,

says Portia in Act III, Scene 2.

> I am neuer merry when I heare sweet musique,

remarks Jessica (Act. V, Scene 1) and Lorenzo replies:

> The reason is, your spirits are attentiue. . . .
> The man that hath no musicke in himselfe,
> Nor is not moued with concord of sweet sounds,
> Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoyles,
> The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
> And his affections darke as *Erobus:*
> Let no such man be trusted.

Consciously or unconsciously, Shakespeare has here taken away some of the reality of the play. This unreality was made necessary by the presence of Shylock. Perhaps for contemporaries Shylock was a mere villain, but no amount of modern criticism [1] will take away from modern readers

[1] Such as, for example, Professor Schücking's *Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays.*

and modern audiences the impression that Shylock is a truly tragic figure. He becomes more than an object of pity; he is a being of awe and majesty, rising far above the vacuous Antonio, the mean and adventurous Bassanio, the would-be clever lady, Portia. There may be justifications for the Christians' contempt of him, but his justification for hating them is still greater. The more we study *The Merchant of Venice* the more we see what a colossal dramatic failure it was. Here two moods, the mood of romantic fantasy and the mood of tragic reality, have met, and neither is satisfied. Shakespeare for once has overstepped the bounds of art.

Much Ado about Nothing (*c.* 1599) presents something of the same phenomenon, although not in so marked a degree. The main story seems traceable back to Bandello, and to it Shakespeare has added the fascinating figures of Benedick and Beatrice. The tragic atmosphere here is not so pronounced as in the last play, largely because Don John, the villain, is little more than a mere puppet, and, while for a moment a tragic conclusion seems inevitable, the serious portion is conducted in a purely romantic manner, never coming out of the picture as it does in *The Merchant of Venice*. Here, too, the improbability of the story aids Shakespeare in his treatment of the material, and music is called in to enwrap the action in its soul-clinging folds. "Sigh no more, ladies," and that exquisite lyric "Pardon goddesse of the night," which Shelley seems to have had in mind when he wrote his hymn to the Spirit of Night, symbolically arouse emotions in our hearts fit for the receiving of the action and characters of the play. Along with the music may be noted, likewise, the use of symbolic language calculated to affect audience or reader. In *The Merchant of Venice* Portia's "It is almost morning" has the same purpose and effect as have Pedro's words in *Much Ado*.

> Good morrow masters, put your Torches out,
> The wolues haue preied, and looke, the gentle day
> Before the wheeles of Phœbus, round about
> Dapples the drowsie East with spots of grey.

These romantic comedies, from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to *Much Ado about Nothing,* seem to take place in a realm of dreams and twilight, ere dawn comes to move us once more back to reality.

In *All's Well that Ends Well* (*c.* 1599) and in *Measure for Measure* (*c.* 1604) the world is darker still. The first of these plays seems taken directly from Paynter's *Pallace of Pleasure,* although the story originally appeared in Boccaccio's *Decamerone.* The story is nauseous and disgusting. The thought of a noble woman's so debasing herself as to capture a husband by the means presented here is so degrading that few can take any pleasure in the reading of the play. Coleridge has called Helena the finest of Shakespeare's heroines, but this nineteenth-century critic's attitude toward all of Shakespeare's women is so sentimental that it becomes almost negligible. Helena is one of the most characterless of Shakespeare's heroines. Bertram, whom she tricks into marriage at the end, is equally without personality. His sudden repentance at the close and his declaration that he will love Helena "ever, ever dearly" seem nothing but artificial nonsense. *Measure for Measure* is a finer play. As the story appeared in Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* the sister to save her brother goes to the deputy-governor; the latter treacherously orders the brother to be hanged; the faithful gaoler saves him, and the sister is married to her betrayer. In adapting this theme to the requirements of the stage, Shakespeare has caused Isabella to retain her chastity and has married her to the Duke at the conclusion of the comedy. Again, the plot is improbable and rather nauseous. In spite of Isabella's words to Angelo in Act II, Scene 2, there is little of a real problem put before us, and the presence of a problem could have been the sole excuse for a work on this theme. Isabella, Angelo, the Duke, and Claudio are all weakly drawn characters, touched all of them with Shakespeare's magic power, but never assuming truly individual proportions. The only portions of the play, indeed, where Shakespeare seems thoroughly to enjoy himself are those which normally are condemned to-day. There is an ex-

quisite humour in the presentation of that lower-world existence where dwell Lucio and Elbow, Froth and Pompey, Mistress Overdone and Barnardine. Especially does he appear to love the last. Barnardine is a mental aristocrat, and his contumacious words to the Duke fully deserve his pardon in the final act of the drama.

Turning back to review this Shakespearian romantic comedy, we find that the plays fall naturally into two groups: those in which the comic and humorous scenes preponderate, and those in which tragedy or scenes of darkness obscure for a time the presence of laughter. In the former, artistic effect has been secured by the subordinating of each play to an element of Puck-like humour, where the roguish spirit of mischief and sage wisdom meet. In the latter, verisimilitude has been strained, and the tragic or horrible scenes detract from our enjoyment of the rest. All the plays have a family likeness. Apart from the kindred characters already noted, and the common romantic tone, we observe the repetition of devices and of stage tricks in one drama after another. The "tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth" was re-echoed many times in his work; it was a joke too good to be lost. Quince, who makes "fritters of English," finds his brother in Elbow of *Measure for Measure* and in Dogberry of *Much Ado about Nothing*. At the same time, the later group, presenting a common artistic failing, is distinct from the first; the plays of this type inevitably lead toward the romantic tragi-comedy of Beaumont and Fletcher.

(ii) The Romantic Tragi-comedy of Beaumont and Fletcher

This romantic tragi-comedy in its fullest form does not make its appearance until the production of *A King and No King* (1611; printed 1619), but after that date it flourished until the closing of the theatres in 1642, and itself gave rise to several marked developments both in tragedy and in comedy. *A King and No King* is as typical as any of

the style of drama which came to be particularly associated with these two authors. The scene is an impossible Iberia, where Arbaces, a headstrong young monarch, falls in love with his supposed sister, Panthea. The theme is a dangerous one, and it is treated with a certain air of prurience. Every means is used to heighten the emotions of the work, and the conversation of the two lovers is such that we feel disappearing the older nobility of the Elizabethan age. The end of the fourth act finds us on the threshold of what appears must be a tragedy:

> *Panthea.* But is there nothing else,
> That we may do, but only walk? methinks
> Brothers and Sisters lawfully may kiss.
> *Arbaces.* And so they may *Panthea,* so will we,
> And kiss again too; we were too scrupulous,
> And foolish, but we will be so no more.
> *Panthea.* If you have any mercy, let me go
> To prison, to my death, to any thing:
> I feel a sin growing upon my blood,
> Worse than all these, hotter than yours.
> *Arbaces.* That is impossible, what shou'd we do?
> *Panthea.* Flie, Sir, for Heavens sake.
> *Arbaces.* So we must away.
> Sin grows upon us more by this delay.

And then suddenly in the last act it is discovered that Arbaces is not the true king, is not the brother of Panthea, the rightful queen, and so can marry her, regain his seemingly lost throne, and be happy ever after. The artificiality of the whole floods in upon us, and we see how far this type of drama, albeit well constructed and well written, has sunk from the deeper, richer, profounder, romantic comedy of Shakespeare. In scene it is more truly impossible; in character it is stereotyped and artificial; in language less close to the true workings of the human heart. It lacks individuality; one romantic tragi-comedy will follow another, without the introduction of fresh characters and often even without the introduction of fresh themes. *Bonduca* (*c.* 1612; printed 1647) presents the same atmosphere with more tragic implications and with a shifting from the East to ancient British history and legend. Here

some distinct merit can be discerned in the portrayal of Bonduca and of Caractacus. Still more typical is *The Custome of the Country* (*c.* 1619; printed 1647). This was written, according to recent theory, by Fletcher and Massinger, but it is probable that the former was mainly responsible for the construction of the play. The theme is thoroughly romantic. Arnoldo marries Zenocia, but Clodio claims the custom of the country, that a newly married girl be sent to his house. Arnoldo, his brother Rutilio, and Zenocia fly by boat. Outside Lisbon Zenocia is captured by pirates, but her two cavaliers escape. From this point the action of the comedy breaks into two. Arnoldo is loved by Hippolyta, is tempted, and is finally cast into the hands of law officers. In her rage Hippolyta poisons Zenocia; but, repenting, releases Arnoldo, brings Zenocia back to life, and herself marries Leopold. The other theme concerns Rutilio, who in a street fight apparently kills Duarte, the son of Guiomar. The last-named character, through a promise, shields the supposed murderer. His adventures are various, and he is about to be executed as a murderer when Duarte, happily recovered, reveals himself. The whole play is one of surprises and intrigue intermingled with exceedingly coarse brothel scenes, which are reminiscent of the similar scenes in *Pericles*.

The number of these dramas makes an individual account of each impossible. *The Pilgrim* (1621; printed 1647), *The Prophetesse* (1622; printed 1647), *The Island Princesse* (1621; printed 1647), and *The Sea Voyage* (1622; printed 1647) are among the best of a series of flagrantly romantic works. The last, no doubt written almost entirely by Fletcher, but showing the presence of some Massinger characteristics in a few scenes, reminds us in the opening of *The Tempest*. The theme is somewhat complicated and deals almost entirely with love. Rosellia, her daughter Clarinda, and others have formed an island commonwealth of women since Rosellia's husband has been reported slain. This husband, Sebastian, in reality lives on a neighbouring island, from which in the end he escapes. Into this romantic atmosphere come Albert and Aminta in search of the

latter's brother Raimond. They are captured by the Amazons, and there Clarinda falls in love with Albert. The men are about to be put to death when Sebastian makes a belated appearance. As is evident, every attempt here is made to intensify the unreality of the setting, and as much opportunity as possible is given for the elaboration of out-of-the-way amorous sentiments. In writing *The Maid in the Mill* (1623; printed 1647) Fletcher seems to have been aided by William Rowley. It is an ill-constructed play with some fine poetical passages and a certain amount of good comic business. The story deals with the enmity of the houses of Julio and Bellides. Antonio of the first falls in love with Ismenia, daughter of Bellides. Their love is nearly crossed by the treachery of Martino and Aminta, who in the end find themselves married to one another. A couple of subplots run alongside of this—one in which Otrante abducts Florimell, but is awed by her purity, and another in which Bustopha, the clownish son of Franio, contributes some rude merriment to the play. Of the same type is *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (*c.* 1614; printed 1634), attributed to Fletcher and Shakespeare. Shakespeare's hand in it, particularly in Act I and in the earlier gaoler scenes, seems to the present writer assuredly evident, but probably no certain judgment can ever be made upon it from the mere evidence of style. Here we find the proud and rather caddish Palamon and the somewhat more refined Arcite thrown into throes of love for Emilia. The play is full of romantic sentiment and ends in a typically tragi-comical way, one of the characters, according to legend, dying and the other accepting the bride. *The Faire Maide of the Inne* (1626; printed 1647) deals with a theme similar to that of *The Maid in the Mill.* Its association with Fletcher has been frequently questioned, but in essence it follows his style. Albertus, father of Cæsario, quarrels with Baptista, father of Mentivole. The last mentioned falls in love with Clarissa, Cæsario's sister, and after a number of complicated delays wins her in marriage at the close. Cæsario, for his part, loves Biancha, the fair maid of the inn, who turns out to be Baptista's

daughter. The plot is fairly well worked out, but is full of impossible situations. A light-comedy theme is introduced in the person of Forobosco, who poses as a magician.

All the Beaumont and Fletcher plays [1] of this type betray the same features. Everywhere is a straining for a more and more impossible romance. Artificiality of sentiment takes the place of truth to character; pruriency that of high moral tone; complication of plot that of due incident and probability of subject-matter. Most of the dramas fail because of the lack of relationship between cause and effect. The *deus ex machina* is everywhere present, and the plays as a consequence lose that unity of purpose, that inevitability, which characterize the works of Shakespeare.

(iii) The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare

Shakespeare himself, however, was unquestionably influenced by Beaumont and Fletcher, producing in *The Tragedie of Cymbeline* (*c.* 1609; printed 1623), *The Winters Tale* (*c.* 1610; printed 1623), *The Tempest* (1611; printed 1623), and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (*c.* 1608; printed 1609) works of a distinctly Beaumont and Fletcher cast. It must be remembered, of course, while we note this influence upon his work, that Shakespeare's own romantic style was moving steadily in this direction in the closing years of the sixteenth century. In *Pericles* Shakespeare no doubt collaborated with another, who has been identified variously as George Wilkins, the author of *The Miseries of Inforst Mariage* (1607), and William Rowley. Concerning the parts taken by these collaborators opinion has differed sadly, although it seems from the style and vitality of the dialogue that even the most suspected passages, the brothel scenes, must have owed something at least to the hand of the master. There is an intimate connexion between the similar passages in *Measure for Measure* and this play.

[1] It is observable that only a small percentage owe anything to Beaumont. Most were written by Fletcher and Massinger in collaboration.

The shipwreck, the sudden discoveries, the descent to what seems the atmosphere of tragedy, and the sudden brightening of the close all mark out the relationship between this play and the romantic tragi-comedies of the time. *Cymbeline,* like *Bonduca,* takes us back to early Britain, and here once more the atmosphere is one of improbability. We note the decay of Shakespeare's style. His characters are no longer individuals, but stock types, for whatever may be said concerning the beauty of Imogen and Perdita and Miranda these women have not the same features as their elder sisters of the late sixteenth century. Shakespeare is evidently growing tired. He repeats himself again and again. Iago is weakened in Iachimo; Othello's story is travestied in that of Cleontes; the shipwreck of *Pericles* is utilized once more for *The Tempest.* For once, in *The Winter's Tale,* Shakespeare reaches his old note of power when he introduces Autolycus, who blesses his stars he is not a simple man, but, in spite of this and of the beautiful verse, *The Winter's Tale* is not a well-constructed play. Peculiarly enough *The Tempest* is the one play of Shakespeare's in which he keeps to the pseudo-classical unities, and one wonders if here he was writing for a more cultured audience, an audience which would be inclined to appreciate more the subservience to rules. Whatever classicism is in the form, however, there is none in the treatment. A mythic isle—Shakespeare does not seem to know whether it be situate in the Mediterranean or in the West Indies—a magician, an airy sprite, a monster of the earth, people lost and found, a novel love scene, all is here that could please the new taste. There is an atmosphere of impossibility in this play, and although Shakespeare by what we may call his transcendental idealism has made of this one of his greatest masterpieces we must recognize that the type, as a type, is lower than any which hitherto he had attempted. Artificiality breathes over the whole.

(iv) The Development of Romantic Drama

With infinite variations, now becoming as in *The Tempest* almost symbolic, now approaching the sphere of comedy proper, and now moving into more tragic realms, the romantic tragi-comedy continued to develop in the seventeenth century. Thomas Dekker started his dramatic work in 1599 with *The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus* (printed 1600), a play which in many ways anticipates the spirit of *The Tempest*. The mingling of mortal and supernatural creations, the rich poetry couched in language of a peculiarly fanciful sort, and the employment of magic show the intimate relationship between the spirit of the two plays. Of the less romantically fantastic types of this form of drama Massinger's efforts are interesting examples. *The Bond Man: An Antient Story* (1623; printed 1624) presents the rising of Syracusan slaves under Marullo, who turns out to be a Theban who is seeking to avenge on Leosthenes the latter's desertion of his sister. The plot is complicated by Marullo's love for Cleora, the new betrothed of Leosthenes, and there is a subplot dealing with the disagreeable Corisca, wife of Creon, who attempts to draw her stepson into sin. No play, perhaps, better illustrates the descent of drama than does this. The construction is excellent; some of the dialogue comes very close to the level of Shakespeare's verse; but the characters are artificial, and the tone of high moral force has disappeared entirely. Even Marullo's seemingly noble passion for Cleora has something in it of a hypocritical and prurient colouring. In *The Renegado, A Tragœcomedie* (1624; printed 1630) there are many of the same features. The play hovers constantly on the verge of tragedy in spite of the comic scenes in which Gazet appears, but in the end Vitelli and his Turkish love Donusa are saved by the conscience-stricken renegade Grimaldi. Particularly interesting in this play is the Catholic atmosphere, the whole drama turning on Christian sentiments. The general atmosphere of the work is fine and full of passion, but, with the sudden tragi-comic conclusion, there is the usual

falling-off in the last act. Love passion, chaste and licentious, added to the usual disquisitions upon morality and virtue fill *The Maid of Honour* (printed 1632). Clearly there are to be seen here the stock situations and the stock characters of this type of drama. There is the usual unhappy but honest lover, Adorni, a pathetic figure; there is the usual comic character in Signior Sylli; there is the licentious lover in Fulgentio, the noble heroine in Camiola, the headstrong king in Roberto, and the amorous woman in Aurelia. In spite of many beautifully written passages, these stereotyped figures detract from our interest in the play as a whole. Romantic sentiment and talk of nobility occupy, too, most of *The Bashful Lover* (1636; printed 1655). Once more stock characters are in evidence. Maria is the typical wronged maiden, and Ascanio the equally typical licentious gallant struck in the end with thoughts of conscience. The emotions of the reader, however, are hardly ever moved in this play, the general tendency of Caroline drama to talk endlessly on matters of passion leaving the dialogue chill and unenthusiastic.

As a whole Massinger is one of the best of those who attempted this style of dramatic writing. His atmosphere is less vitiated than that of Fletcher and Shirley, but even in him the general degeneracy of the theatre is quite evident. He repeats his characters, as he repeats his themes. The profound and deep-felt passion that is to be found in Shakespeare has, in his pages, given way to rhetoric. Even his virtue is felt at times to be a thing external, a thing to be talked about rather than to be felt. Above all, in the unnatural conclusions to his plays we discern the loss of the greater spirit which made possible the terror of *King Lear* and the tremendous close of *Othello*.

There are upward of twenty dramatists who approached this style of drama in the thirty years between 1610 and 1640. Only a few of these can find mention here.

Thomas Middleton and William Rowley are associated by collaboration as are Fletcher and Massinger. Both are rather more important for their purely comic work than for their efforts in the sphere of tragi-comedy. *The*

Mayor of Quinborough (printed 1661, but probably one of Middleton's earliest efforts), *A Tragi-Coomodie, Called the Witch* (printed 1778, written by Middleton), *A Faire Quarrell* (printed 1617, by Middleton and Rowley), *The Spanish Gipsie* (1621–2; printed 1653, a joint effort), all call for attention in this section. *The Mayor of Quinborough* is the weakest of them all, presenting crude farce of the roughest form alongside of dismal tragedy. Only some few passages of startling poetry merit notice in it. In mentioning this play, attention might be drawn to the numberless dramatic fashions of the time. Ancient Britain called many of the dramatists to turn their eyes upon Geoffrey of Monmouth and his companions, so that this play, *Lear, Cymbeline, Bonduca,* and a host of other tragedies and tragi-comedies appear between 1606 and 1616. This is only one of the similar movements of the time, perhaps indicative of the general decay of independence and individuality in the age.[1] *The Witch,* considered as a work of art, is but a pitiful production, although its connexion with *Macbeth* will always cause interest to be taken in it, and its melodramatic features are eminently typical of certain tendencies of the time. The story of the play, complicated by a series of cross-currents, is, briefly, that a Duke, who has slain his Duchess's father, bids her pledge his health in a cup made of her father's skull. The Duchess, annoyed at this flamboyant humour, seeks means to poison her husband, thinks he is dead, but returns to his grace when it is found that the dose has not been sufficiently strong to prove fatal. Naturally, out of a theme such as this little of true dramatic worth could spring. With *A Fair Quarrel* we reach a different world entirely, and it is legitimate to argue that Rowley was responsible for many of the more brilliant passages in this play and in those which follow. In *A Fair Quarrel* the scene is not romantically set in some Eastern empire, but the general atmosphere of sentiment connects this drama with the other plays we have been considering. Three separate plots, are to be traced in the work, two of which are of

[1] *Cf. infra,* p. 175.

minor importance. It is the third which is of value. The duel of Captain Ager with the Colonel, Lady Ager's despair and her attempt to prevent the duel from taking place, remove us to a realm far enough away from the vapid rhetoric of so many of the dramatists of the period. We feel here the presence of a mind purer and deeper thinking than is to be discovered among the Fletchers and Shirleys of Caroline days. *The Changeling* has something of the same power, although it is expressed in a different way. Once more we can trace Rowley's influence, if not in the actual wording at least in the conception of character. It is not too much to say that the most subtle character-drawing in Caroline drama is to be found in this tragedy, which will later be considered in more detail. *The Spanish Gipsy* is an excellently written tragi-comedy. Alvarez and Pretiosa are disguised as gipsies; they are eventually discovered, and the latter marries Don John. With this main theme goes another, wherein the licentious Roderigo deflowers Clara, but, repentance-struck, ultimately marries her. Comic relief is presented in Sancho and Soto. There are no outstanding characters here, although Pretiosa is a living type, but the general high tone of the work, even in spite of the hackneyed situation, reflects credit on these two collaborators.

Among those who, later, did most to cultivate this form of drama might be numbered Thomas Ford, William Shirley, and Sir William D'Avenant, the last-mentioned destined to prove one of the main links between the earlier and the later Caroline eras. Ford's activity was confined mainly to the sphere of the horror tragedy, but in two dramas, *The Fancies, Chast and Noble* (printed 1638) and *The Ladies Triall* (1638; printed 1639), he associated himself with the Beaumont and Fletcher romance. In both of these we move away from the higher nobility of Rowley and Middleton. *The Fancies* seems to exist for indelicate situations. The three nieces of Octavio, Marquis of Siena, kept in seclusion and not revealed as his relations, as well as the character of Flavia, sold by her husband to a lord of the Court, afford the author plenty of opportunity

for indulging in those indelicately passionate scenes more fully expressed in his tragedies. Decadence in Ford had firmly set its seal upon the age. *The Lady's Trial* is slightly more healthy in tone, but the characters are hopelessly artificial and stereotyped. Aurelio is the usual faithful friend; Adorni the usual licentious lover; Spinella the inevitable injured heroine; and Auria the equally inevitable jealous husband. Except for a few passages of extraordinary beauty of language, the play has little merit; it is one of the mechanically conceived and mechanically constructed dramas of the age.

Shirley's work in this style is in bulk greater than any of the others save that of Fletcher. Over half a score of his plays can be classed in this romantic tragi-comedy section, although not one of them stands forward as a masterpiece. They have a hopeless similarity one to another, and display lack of individuality in the treatment of character and of theme. Shirley, we may say, is the last great poet of the 'Elizabethan' era, but how far he has sunk can be realized by a glance at even the best of his works. Of these romantic comedies perhaps the best are *The Brothers* (1626; printed 1653), *Changes: Or, Love in a Maze* (1632), *The Young Admirall* (1633; printed 1637), and *The Gamester* (1633; printed 1637). The first deals with the stock figure of a tyrannical father and the true love of Felisarda and Fernando. Some scenes in it are cleverly written, but the romantic portion of the plot is somewhat dull and uninteresting. *Changes* deals more entirely with the world of wit, and, were it not for some serious scenes, might be classed with the more comic productions of Shirley's pen. *The Young Admiral,* albeit the figures are mechanically conceived, is a much finer play than either of the other two. The complicated plot is excellently managed, and Rosinda's character has some features that call for praise. It is much healthier in tone than that which succeeded it, *The Gamester.* Comedy, pathos, indelicacy, coarseness, and rhetorical sentiment mingle in this drama. The plot, given to the dramatist by King Charles himself, is excellently worked out, but the

failure of the age is seen in the decadent tone of much of the dialogue and in the general inability of the playwright to rise above hackneyed situation. The 'roaring' scenes, for example, which provide a good deal of the comic interest, are obviously reminiscent of many similar scenes in earlier dramas. It is useless noting further Shirley's romantic works. Nearly all of them, *The Gratefull Servant* (printed 1630), *The Bird in a Cage* (printed 1633), *The Opportunitie* (printed 1640), and the rest, show similar intermingling of high poetry, rhetorical sentiment, and indelicate, coarse, and decadent imaginings.

With D'Avenant's *The Platonick Lovers* (printed 1636) and *Love and Honour* (1634; printed 1649) we reach the point where the purely romantic tragi-comedy tends to move into the world of the heroic drama. In the elaboration of platonic sentiment in the first, and the theme (Love and Honour) of the second, we come very close to the spirit of Dryden and of Orrery. The Theander and Eurithea of *The Platonic Lovers* are not far removed from Almanzor and Almahide, and *Love and Honour* is full of that lofty, inflated heroic diction so typical of the later drama. As we shall find, the heroic tragedy or tragi-comedy is a direct descendant of the tragi-comic atmosphere inaugurated by Beaumont and Fletcher in 1611 and hinted at even in the mid-sixteenth century in the tragi-comic interludes.

Of the lesser writers of this time there are many, but few require even mention here. Robert Davenport contributed an interesting specimen of this drama in *The City Night-Cap: Or, Crede quod habes, & habes* (1624 printed 1661), a peculiar play written in more than ordinarily fine blank verse. The main theme is taken from Cervantes' oft-used tale of the *Curioso Impertinente*. Lorenzo, a typically jealous husband, bids Philippo tempt his wife Abstemia. She is honest, but Lorenzo, in the madness of his fever, suborns slaves to witness against her. She leaves the city for Milan, but is eventually reconciled to her husband. Opposed to this is a contrary story in which the over-trusting Lodovico allows all liberty to his priggish

wife Dorothea. She sins with Francisco and confesses her fault to her husband when he comes to her disguised as a friar. Several of the scenes remind us of the brothel portions of *Pericles* and of *The Woman Hater;* these, like the more serious portions of the drama, are well written. As a whole it is one of the best of the plays of this kind written during the period. Thomas Rawlins' *The Rebellion* (1639; printed 1640) is a much less capably written play, but it is interesting as showing the elaboration of those tricks of the stage with which the Restoration drama was filled. Pathos appears in the love of Giovanno and Evadne, and there are the usual low-comedy scenes beloved by audiences of the time in the tailors, who remind us of Dekker's shoemakers. It is the stage trappings, however that call for most attention—a city besieged, bandits, a Machiavellian villain, jealousies, class pride, prisons, rescues, disguisings—all mingled into a singularly romantic plot. With *The Queene of Arragon* (printed 1640) of William Habington we move into the sphere of Dryden's *Secret Love.* The witty, frivolous Cleantha is conceived in his style. This maiden is pursued by Sanmartino; she succeeds in cheating him and marries Oniate. The more serious portion of the play deals with the magnanimous sentimental loves of Decastro, Ascanio, and Florentio for the Queen. In its union of wit and of heroic idealism it directly anticipates what was to prove one of the most popular forms of Restoration drama. Many are the dramas of the time which adopt something of the same atmosphere. Sir William Berkeley's *The Lost Lady* (printed 1638) is a fairly well-written specimen of the class, with an excellently drawn character in Hermione. The device of the heroine, however, in her disguise as a Moor, removes the theme of the play far from the realms of probability. *The Jealous Lovers* (printed 1632) of Thomas Randolph and *The Royall Slave* (1636; printed 1639) of William Cartwright might likewise be mentioned as typical examples of this essentially Caroline form of drama.

The actual examination of particular plays is of less importance than the grasping of the salient characteristics of

the group. As has been shown, the tendency is constantly toward the hopelessly unreal and the impossible. The plots are full of the most artificial and startling devices; the characters are no longer individualized, but reduced to the level of mere types. In some of the later plays, too, a movement can be seen which led ultimately to the elaboration of heroic sentiment and heroic proportions in the plays of the Restoration. It will further be noted that even in the early seventeenth century this tragi-comedy broke into two clearly marked divisions, each destined to be the forerunner of a definite type of drama in after years. The term tragi-comedy may apply to plays of the type of *A King and No King,* where the atmosphere is almost wholly serious, but the conclusion moderately happy; it may also apply to plays such as *The Queen of Arragon,* where a comic plot moves forward alongside of a tragic. The first is the predecessor of the heroic drama proper; the second leads toward the 'mixed' species patronized in his early days by Dryden, and by Etherege in *The Comical Revenge.* The important point to notice in all this development is the weakening of true dramatic conception. Shakespeare, in spite of his few lapses, had shown clearly the main scope of great drama; his successors, writing for a less manly public, lost sight of his high purpose. The extravagant conclusions, introduced for the sake of novelty, destroyed the atmosphere of many of the plays; the crude intermingling of tragedy and of comedy gave an effect that may have interested the audiences of the time, but which we can never accept as a true purpose in dramatic art.

(v) Pastoral Plays

With these romantic tragi-comedies may possibly be taken the various pastoral plays written between 1600 and 1642. Shakespeare's sixteenth-century comedies, no doubt, were pastoral in a sense, but their pastoralism was not wholly out of touch with reality. In the years that followed, this element, which seems to have a perennial attraction for ages of Court corruption and decadent life, came to assume more

artificial features, and to this it may have been led partly by the immense interest taken in the many romances of a similar atmosphere which catered for the requirements of a leisured reading public. Ben Jonson descended from his bitter portraiture of contemporary follies to pen *The Sad Shepherd* (printed 1641), Shirley moved into the same world in *A Pastorall called the Arcadia* (printed 1640), Fletcher adopted it in *The Faithful Shepheardesse* (printed 1629), Randolph in his *Amyntas or The Impossible Dowry* (printed 1638), an adaptation of Tasso's famous dramatic poem *Aminta,* and Rutter used the pastoral conventions for his *Shepheards Holy-Day* (printed 1635). Again and again the writers of the time, in prose romance, in lyric ecstasy, in more ambitious stanzaic poem, essayed this style, bringing to it often something of beauty, but displaying in their concentration upon a form of art which gives no scope for realistic passion the gradually narrowing limits of their genius. Amongst all the works of this kind the efforts of Ben Jonson and of Fletcher have become deservedly the most famous. There is apparent in their works a charm of expression and a beauty of conception lacking in the plays of the others. At the same time, even the best plays of this class have about them an atmosphere of artificiality, which effectually prevents any pastoral play reaching the summits of literary expression. Pastoral, after all, remains a poet's game, and while it may be pleasant for a winter hour or so to imagine that *Et ego in Arcadia* one always feels that this form of art is weak and lacking in interest. Charm it may have, and prettiness of a Watteauesque pattern, but never profound thought and high passion. Pan and his nymphs, Chloris and Corydon, pass into forgetfulness before the breezy laughter of a Falstaff or the tragic terror of a Lear.

CHAPTER III

REALISTIC COMEDY AND SATIRICAL PLAYS

Shakespeare and Jonson

ALWAYS opposed to the artificiality of the romantic tragi-comedy and of the pastoral drama is to be found in the seventeenth century the realistic comedy. It has already been seen how in the late sixteenth century the realistic farce, deriving its tone from the earlier interludes, had preserved an independent existence alongside of the romantic comedy patronized by Greene and Lyly. This earlier form of realistic play, often with close reminiscences of the Latin drama, was adopted by many dramatists in the last years of Elizabeth's reign, and was carried forward by them until Jonson came to set his seal upon the type and give it a strength and a purpose which previously it had only too often lacked.

Among these earlier dramatists Shakespeare, naturally, calls for first attention, for in *The Taming of the Shrew* (*c.* 1595; printed 1623) and in *A most pleasaunt and excellent conceited Comedie, of Syr Iohn Falstaffe, and the merrie Wiues of Windsor* (*c.* 1599; printed 1602) he produced two of the most capable and interesting works of this type written in the last years of the century. Both of these are reworkings of older dramas, the first of a still extant *Taming of A Shrew,* and the second of a play now lost—probably, according to the theory of recent investigators, of *The Jealous Comedy* mentioned in Henslowe's *Diary.* The exact amount of Shakespearian dialogue in each has been a point of controversy for many years. Some would give to Shakespeare the two 'Shrew' plays, others would deny that he wrote anything but a few lines of the later one; Falstaff in *The Merry Wives* seems to many a travesty of the fat knight of *Henry IV,* to many he seems a truly Shakespearian figure. The plays, however, always remain, and remain

as excellent acting farces, displaying the hand, if not of Shakespeare entirely, at least of an exceedingly capable playwright who knew the requirements and exigencies of the Elizabethan stage. Both plays are marked by many more local touches than any other of Shakespeare's known workmanship; the scenes of both are essentially middle-class; the language is more boisterous; the action is less restrained and less coloured by romantic sentiment. There is a complete chasm between the scenes of these plays and, for example, the Sir Toby scenes of *Twelfth Night* or the Bottom scenes of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In the latter we are in the presence of Shakespeare's humour; in the former there is only the more farcical and the more realistic type of comic dialogue and of comic characterization. These plays may be taken as typical of a number of others of kindred features; good acting farces, with entertainingly comic scenes and occasionally well-drawn characters, with many reminiscences of Terentian and Plautan comedy, but frequently lacking unity of aim and without any higher appeal.

To Ben Jonson belongs the credit of infusing into this form of drama a richer and a deeper note. Jonson, intimately conversant with the life of his own time, a man closely associated with the theatre, and, although boasting no university degree, steeped in the literatures of classic times, was eminently fitted to carry out his self-appointed task. He appeared at a time when the University Wits and Shakespeare, their hated follower, were establishing upon the stage the romantic comedy and the flamboyant tragedy. He looked round him and saw the classic precision he adored being crushed out of existence in the face of more popular tendencies. He found a romantic comedy he must have regarded as foolish, a farcical type lacking in definite purpose, a crude revenge tragedy full of romantic grotesqueries, and a superman tragedy wanting in all calmness and restraint. Boldly, as was his way, he set himself to cure the theatrical evils of the time by establishing a comic and a tragic form based on classic example. In the latter endeavour he had no success; in the former he succeeded in making himself the greatest figure of his age.

It is undeniable that his efforts were tentative. We know that he had written many plays before the appearance of the first version of *Every Man in his Humour* in 1598; we can see how his ideas, or his daring, developed between the publication of that first version and the issue of the 1616 edition of his *Works*. Indeed, while glancing at the plays written between 1595 and 1600 we may even come to the conclusion that this pioneer was anticipated and maybe was influenced by other contemporaries, including at their head the robust figure of George Chapman. On the other hand, whatever tentative movements we discover in his art and whatever influence of others we find, Jonson will always remain the chief and dominating dramatist of the satirical comedy.

His extant plays are readily divisible into one or two well-marked groups. The masques, the one unfinished pastoral, and the tragedies stand each by themselves. In the realm of comedy we find *The Case is Alterd* (printed 1609, but possibly acted about 1597), *Every Man in his Humor* (acted 1598; printed in two versions, 1601 and 1616), *The Comicall Satyre of Every Man Out Of his Humor* (1599; printed 1600), *The Fountaine of Selfe-Loue. Or Cynthias Reuels* (*c.* 1600; printed 1601), *Poetaster or The Arraignment* (1601; printed 1602), *Volpone Or The Foxe* (1606; printed 1607), *Epicoene, Or The silent Woman* (1609; printed 1616), *The Alchemist* (1610; printed 1612), *Bartholomew Fayre* (1614; printed 1631), *The Diuell is an Asse* (1616; printed 1631), *The Staple of Newes* (1625; printed 1631), *The Magnetick Lady: Or, Humors Reconcil'd* (printed 1640), and *A Tale of a Tub* (printed 1640). There is an obvious gap between the first five and the rest, so that the four famous later plays, *Volpone, Epicoene, The Alchemist,* and *Bartholomew Fair* fall into a group by themselves. For our purpose it may be well to start with the revised (1616) version of what is Jonson's most famous play, *Every Man in his Humour*. The very title of this play shows us Jonson's aim in characterization. He endeavours to harmonize a medieval medical conceit with the methods employed in the Latin theatre. For the Middle

Ages the 'humours' or natural moistures of the brain governed a man's nature; too much of one, or a shifting of the due proportions governing normality, would produce eccentricity of one sort or another. Thus melancholy, greed, timorousness, choler, all were 'humours,' and the person who exhibited any of these was described as 'humorous.' It is obvious that if art is to make use of these humours it has to depart to a certain extent from the more individual portraiture of separate men and women. It has to deal with a type, not with a personality. This is precisely what Terence did in his dramas. His testy old fathers are all the same, his cunning slaves have all the same features; he seizes, that is to say, some salient feature of a class of men and produces his characters to pattern. This method Jonson, being a classicist, determined to follow. Still further, he determined to carry into practice a time-honoured dictum of classical critics. Every one who had written about comedy had assumed that the object of this form of drama was to ridicule the vices of men, put folly in a foolish shape before the audience, and so laugh the spectators into good behaviour. Unanimous as were the critics on this point, few dramatists had put it into practice. Jonson determined that his comedy should be a satiric comedy; and for that purpose the humours gave him the very tool he required. All satire depends upon exaggeration, and by exaggerating his eccentricities Jonson was able to produce exactly the effect at which he aimed.

When we come to view this particular comedy of Jonson's we see the way in which he has realized his ideal. His drama is no longer merely farcical; it is written with a purpose. He has allied scholarship with art and made his humours real. Here, declares the author himself in his prologue, are no impossible romantic episodes, no stage tricks, no fantastic fripperies,

> But deedes, and language, such as men doe vse:
> And persons, such as *Comœdie* would chuse.
> When she would shew an Image of the times,
> And sport with humane follies, not with crimes.

The follies of a *braggadocio,* of a tyrannous father, of a jealous husband, all are put before us; the ruling eccentricities of the age are mocked out of court. This mention of the typical characters of the play may lead us to inquire exactly into Jonson's merits. We see in the *dramatis personæ* very little beyond anglicized figures taken from Latin comedy. Bobadill and Kiteley and Brainworm all have their prototypes in the dramatic works of Terence. May we not say, therefore, that Jonson is more of an adapter than of an individual dramatist? Does this not betoken a fatal lack of inventiveness on his part? Moreover, when we come to analyse the plot of the play we find many points wherein the author has fallen short of his ideal. One may suffice as an example. He believes in unity of construction; yet *Every Man in his Humour* is by no means an artistic whole. For the first scenes our interest centres upon Knowell, for the rest it centres upon Knowell's son. There are in the play, therefore, two spheres of interest, just as there are in the later play *Bartholomew Fair,* and our impression of the play as a whole is weakened thereby. There can be no denial that Jonson, in spite of his high art and his constant care, often proves himself artistically at fault. At the same time, his skill in making the old humours live, his vivid observation of contemporary life, his penetrating insight into the vices of his age, distinguish his plays as well above the usual level of the time. Jonson is a magnificent satirist. He has just that power of revealing the salient features and of repressing the points not required for his portrait which characterize the work of the greatest satirists of classical times and later. Unlike Shakespeare, he had the true satirist's horror of traits which he himself possessed. Boastful and arrogant, he hated boastfulness and arrogance; mixing in the amusements of tavern life, he yet hated many of the things he saw there. Like the other satirists, he had the power of recognizing his own follies and vices in others. Moreover, Jonson was a true dramatist. Some of his later plays may be weak and even uninteresting; but in *Every Man in his Humour* and in the other comedies which rank

with this he displays his vast power over a kind of theatrical wit. His plays are not witty as are the comedies of the Restoration writers, but he is able to get an infinite deal of fun out of stage situation allied to character. His witticisms are not, to employ French terminology, the result of the *mot d'esprit*, but of the *mot de caractère* and the *mot de situation*. There is a great amount of this in the scenes where Stephen and Matthew appear. Thus, for example, in Act III, Scene 1, Bobadill is discoursing of his prowess, and Edward Knowell is leading him on, the two gulls listening eagerly.

Bob. Oh lord, sir? by S. George, I was the first man, that entred the breach: and, had I not effected it with resolution, I had beene slaine, if I had had millions of liues.

E. Kn. 'Twas pittie, you had not ten; a cats, and your owne, ifaith. But, was it possible?

(*Mat.* ' Pray you, marke this discourse, sir.

Step. So, I doe.)

Another example of the same type of wit is to be found at the close of Act IV, Scene 2, when Bobadill draws in affected anger.

E. Kn. Gentlemen, forbeare, I pray you.

Bob. Well, sirrah, you, Holofernes: by my hand, I will pinck your flesh, full of holes, with my rapier for this; I will, by this good heauen: Nay, let him come, let him come, gentlemen, by the body of Saint George, Ile not kill him.

It is touches such as these which show Jonson as the true dramatist.

That Jonson moved into this world of contemporary London life only by slow gradations is made clear by the fact that the first quarto of *Every Man in his Humour* is set in Italy with all the characters Italian, and by the additional facts that *The Case is Altered* is scened in Milan, and *Every Man out of his Humour* is in an undetermined locality with characters mainly of Italian titles. *Cynthia's Revels* has, moreover, its scene in "Gargaphie" and *Poetaster* is set in a fanciful Rome. The change from this sphere of fantastic satire to the realistic note of the 1616 *Every Man in his Humour* and *Bartholomew Fair* came to Jonson only later in life. His art at first was influenced

by the more imaginative and romantic touches apparent in such plays as *Love's Labour's Lost* in the late sixteenth century.

This is particularly noticeable in Jonson's first (extant) comedy, *The Case is Altered,* where Juniper and Onion are made instruments to satirize speech fashions of the day just as the various comic characters are in *Love's Labour's Lost.* There may be a touch of ridicule in the romantic plot of this drama, with its theme of a child lost at birth and reappearing to a distressed father and of a highborn maiden brought up, in ignorance of her parentage, in the hut of a miserly beggar, but after all Jonson got his theme from good classical sources, the *Aulularia* and the *Captivi.* The main interest of the piece, however, does not lie in its romantic episodes; the author's chief care was given to the more humorous figures of Juniper, Onion, and Jaques. There may be noted here a frequent failing in Jonson's art. Finely neo-classical as he is, and careful over the construction of his plots, he often allows his personal bitterness to interfere with his artistry. Thus in this particular play the first scene opens to introduce us to a gentleman named Antonio Balladino, who is readily recognized as the contemporary poet and dramatist, Anthony Munday. We are led to expect that Balladino will play a prominent part in the development of the story, but he never reappears. Jonson had had his fling at his rival and let him go, careless of the consequences to his art.

This personal bitterness with less interference with the conduct of the plot appears again in *Every Man out of his Humour,* in which unquestionably Clove is meant as a satirical portrait of Marston, Carlo Buffone of a certain Charles Chester, and Puntarvolo presumably of Sir Walter Raleigh. The plot of this comedy is at one and the same time of the most subtle and delicate structure and of the most mechanical form. We can see here, as we cannot see in Shakespeare's plays, the working of intellect behind the *dramatis personæ,* and even while we admire the sheer cleverness of Jonson's invention we feel that there is not here present that higher imagination which conceived the

more organic unities of Shakespeare's works. The presenting of the various humours as outhumoured at the last, and the final triumph that lies in the outhumouring of the outhumourer is excellently carried through, so that this stands as one of the most brilliant of Jonson's plays. Hardly any comedy so abounds in critical dicta as does this; it is Jonson's first real challenge to his contemporaries. He gives us here his well-known definition of a humour:

> As when some one peculiar quality
> Doth so possesse a man, that it doth draw
> All his affects, his spirits, and his powers
> In their confluctions all to runne one way.
> This may be truly said to be a Humor,
> But that a Rooke in wearing a pide feather,
> The cable hatband, or the three-pild ruffe,
> A yard of shoe-tie, or the Switzers knot
> On his French garters, should affect a Humor,
> O, 'tis more than most ridiculous.

So, too, he opens a discussion on the nature of comedy, and shows plainly his detestation of the common romantic business of the age in the words of Mites, who complains

> That the argument of his Comedie might haue been of some other nature, as of a Duke to be in loue with a Countesse, & that Countesse to be in loue with the Dukes son, & the son to loue the Ladies waiting maid: some such crosse woeing, with a Clowne to their seruing man, better than to be thus neare and familiarly allied to the time,

and in Cordatus' answer he displays his own attitude:

> You say well, but I would faine heare one of these Autumne-iudgements define once, *Quid sit Comœdia?* if he cannot, let him content himselfe with *Cicero's* definition (till he haue strength to propose to himself a better) who would haue a Comedie to be *Imitatio vitæ, Speculum Consuetudinis, Imago veritatis,* a thing throughout pleasant and ridiculous, and accomodated to the correction of manners.

With *Cynthia's Revels* Jonson shows a certain decadence in his art. His treatment of the allegorical and mythical material is uninspired and uninteresting, although the opening with its pleasant little ditty sung by Echo is charming enough. Again satire of literary oddities and of literary rivals fills almost the entirety of the play. *Poetaster*

continues in the same strain, Marston as Crispinus occupying the centre of the story, with Dekker as Demetrius Fannius, his second in command. Jonson himself is presented as the poet Horace. There are some good things in this comedy, but as a whole it fails to arouse in us the interest excited by a reading of *Every Man in his Humour.* The satire was growing too strong for the author. The men who "did provoke" him "with their petulant stiles on every stage" had made him forget the best of his art.

Jonson's next play, *Volpone,* has none of this personal bitterness, but there is instead a marked deepening of his hatred at the follies and vices of his time. Hardly a single character in the whole play is virtuous or honest. Volpone himself, Corbaccio, Voltore, Lady Politick Would-bee, and the rest are rapacious, licentious, vicious, so that the play as a whole, although it is excellently constructed and has a unity of aim finer than that of any of Jonson's previous plays, shows both the growing corruption of the age and the natural tendency of the satirist to widen his range of observation and to intensify in his own mind the vices at which he merely mocked before. So Swift passed from the land of Lilliput to the country of the Houyhnhnms. This note of deepened horror is continued in *The Alchemist* and in *Bartholomew Fair,* two of his finest comedies. In the former all the men are either rascally or avaricious, the women vain and libertine; in the latter Jonson's lash falls with no sparing hand upon the Puritans and on current hypocrisy. These are among the best comedies in the English language, but the coarseness and even the brutality of Jonson's later style detract considerably from their beauty. There is not here the high idealism of a Swift to atone for the ugliness; there is only the rather rough disgust of a robust but unrefined man at "vulgar errors."

(ii) Chapman and Dekker

Apart from *Epicoene,* a singularly bright comedy in the midst of this darkness, Jonson's work finished with these plays. His later comedies are all weak and marred by

exaggeration and extravagance. In these earlier works, however, he had set his mark on the age, and many essayed to follow him in his own style. Among these the classically minded George Chapman is by no means the least. Chapman was born about 1560, and was writing for the stage in 1596; he died in 1634. Of his plays the earliest extant is *The Blinde Begger of Alexandria, most pleasantly discoursing his variable humours in disguised shapes full of Conceite and pleasure* (1596; printed 1598). This is followed by a series of others: *A pleasant Comedy entituled: An Humerous dayes Myrth* (1597; printed 1599), *The Gentleman Usher* (*c.* 1602; printed 1606), *Al Fooles* (*c.* 1604; printed 1605), *Monsieur D'Olive* (1604; printed 1606), *Eastward Hoe* (1605; printed in 1605 as by Chapman, Jonson, and Marston), *May-Day* (*c.* 1609; printed 1611), *The Widdowes Teares* (*c.* 1609; printed 1612), as well as *The Ball* (1632; printed 1639), written in collaboration with Shirley. The first of these is a poor work, and shows the twin influence of the romantic and realistic schools. The blind beggar is a certain Cleanthes in disguise, a noble banished and beloved by Queen Ægiale. This gentleman seems to have a propensity for masquerades, for in the course of the play he appears as a Count and as Leon, marrying in these shapes both Elimine and Samathis. In the end, as Cleanthes, he defeats the enemies of Egypt and succeeds in providing his superfluous wives with husbands in the persons of a couple of kings. *An Humorous Day's Mirth* shows a slight advance in its well-developed plot and interestingly displayed characters. This progress is still further marked in *The Gentleman Usher,* a comedy full of humorous types; the plot is certainly of the tragi-comic sort, but the *dramatis personæ* belong mainly to the school of Jonson. In it Alphonso is an old duke who loves Margaret; the latter's affections are placed on Alphonso's son, Vincentio. Vincentio is aided by Strozza and persuades Bassiolo, the usher, to act for him. Alphonso's tool is Medice, who attempts the lives of both Strozza and Vincentio. Alongside of this romantic plot move the elderly, sack-loving widow Corteza, the foolish

Pogio, and the pedant Sarpego—a character, be it remarked, who bears a striking resemblance to old Polonius. *All Fools* marks a culmination in this upward movement. Here a certain spice of poetic fantasy is added to the realistic treatment of a theme taken from *Heautontimoroumenos,* but influenced unquestionably by *Every Man out of his Humour.* The plot is an interesting one, carried along two distinct lines. In the one, Gostanzo, the testy old father of the gay Valerio, who is married secretly to Gratiana, and of Bellanora, beloved by Fortunio, elder son of the indulgent Marc Antonio, tries his best to govern his children. His younger son, Rinaldo, informs him that Gratiana is married to Fortunio; nothing suspecting, he takes them to his house and there sees his own son Valerio kissing the wife. He is further deceived into telling Marc Antonio that the girl is married to his son. The other plot deals with the jealous Cornelio, baited by the rascally Rinaldo and Valerio. In the attempt to show various humours, and, further, in the effort to show those humours out-humoured, Chapman displays clearly his debt to Jonson's example. *Monsieur D'Olive* is somewhat more in the strain of *The Gentleman Usher,* the plot being partly serious in its development. Marcellina, owing to the jealousy of Count Vaumont, has vowed eternal seclusion. So, too, because of the death of his wife, Count S. Anne mourns constantly in solitude. Vandome discovers that the last mentioned is beloved by Eurione, and by a trick he draws the two hermits from their self-appointed retirement. This serious plot is coloured constantly by the humour surrounding Monsieur D'Olive, who is gulled by Rhoderique and Mugeron into believing he is a wit. In this play, as is evident, Chapman comes nearest to the romantic tragi-comic strain then so much in fashion. The compositely written *Eastward Ho* is a definite return to realism, allied to a moralizing touch in the presentation of the good apprentice Golding, marrying his master's daughter and loaded with honours, and of Quicksilver, rioting his goods away and ending in the hands of the watch. The plot is one of vice and folly, the various humours being well hit

off although not so exaggerated as are those in Jonson's comedies. A similar series of follies and vices is presented in *May Day,* with its boasting soldier in Quintiliano, a brother of Bobadill, its licentious old sinner in Lodovico and its rascally serving-men. *The Widow's Tears* is more interestingly individual. The plot of this, albeit set in some romantic realm, is thoroughly realistic. Tharsalio, the blunt wooer, wins, contrary to all belief, the newly widowed Countess Eudora, and Cynthia, Lysander's wife, shows a readiness to fall in love soon after her husband's death. The two women are intended to represent the weakness and fickleness of the female sex, Chapman's feelings in this regard being similar to those of Jonson; and his bitterness becomes almost nauseating in the tomb scene, where Cynthia embraces an unknown soldier in the very presence of her husband's coffin. The ugliness of the scene is, however, mitigated by the delightful ruse by which the wife, in imminent danger of being exposed, turns the tables nimbly upon her rightfully wrathful husband. Of *The Ball* it is impossible to determine accurately the portions of Chapman's and the portions of Shirley's workmanship. The theme of the play is slight, but the atmosphere of wit allied to the presentation of interesting characters in Mr Bostock and Colonel Winfield mark out the play as one of the best of Caroline comedies. It will be noted here that the general tone of comedy has considerably changed from the tone apparent in Chapman's early works. In general, Chapman shows himself one of the most capable dramatists of his time, a trifle heavy and rough on occasion, but with a fund of humour and a classically trained mind which can well determine the just proportions of a dramatic plot.

Along with him one might associate Jonson's hated rival, Thomas Dekker, one of the freshest and most delightful, if by no means one of the most gifted, theatrical writers of the time. Of his comic pieces *The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus* (1599; printed 1600) is a charmingly poetical piece, but his general style lay rather in the direction of realism. This style is to be traced in *The Shomakers*

Holiday. Or the Gentle Craft (1599; printed 1600), in *West-ward Hoe* (1604; printed 1607 as by Dekker and Webster), in *North-ward Hoe* (1605; printed 1607 as by the same two writers), in *The Roaring Girle. Or Moll Cut-Purse* (*c.* 1610; printed 1611 as by Dekker and Middleton), and in one or two other plays less worthy of detailed attention. The satirical strain is evident in *Satiro-mastix. Or The untrussing of the Humorous Poet* (1601; printed 1602), no doubt the joint reply of Dekker and Marston to Jonson's taunts in his early comedies. It has been suggested, and it is conceivably possible, that one or two of the finer scenes in this play were penned by Shakespeare himself. There is, at least, contemporary record that that poet did retaliate to Jonson's taunts, and some episodes in *Satiromastix* show true marks of genius. *Satiromastix* brings us back to *Poetaster* and the rest; here Horace once more symbolizes Jonson, but this time Horace is not the poet he was in the former piece, but is presented as a dogmatic, conceited little versifier who endeavours to write by the aid of intellect and a kind of riming-dictionary. No more humorous scene can be discovered in the whole of this *Poetomachia* than that in which Horace is introduced leaning over his manuscripts in the act of penning an ode:

> O me thy Priest inspire.
> For I to thee and thine immortall name,
> In—in—in golden tunes,
> For I to thee and thine immortall name—
> In—sacred raptures flowing, flowing, swimming, swimming:
> In sacred raptures swimming,
> Immortal name, game, dame, tame, lame, lame, lame,
> Pux, hath, shame, proclaime, oh——
> In Sacred raptures flowing, will proclaime, not——
> O me thy Priest inspyre!
> For I to thee and thine imortall name,
> In flowing numbers fild with spright and flame,
> Good, good, in flowing numbers fild with spright & flame.

Dekker's real gifts, however, lay not in satire, but in purely realistic comedy. In this style he does not at all follow that of Jonson; his method is not satiric, but sympathetic. He has a peculiarly broad humanitarian attitude toward

life, and his *forte* lies in a loving description of the lower world of London. He is a sentimental realist who, instead of seeking with the satirist for the vices of life, searches for the good. This feature of his art is most evident in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and in *The Roaring Girl.* The first of these, a deservedly popular play, introduces us to the entertaining circle of Simon Eyre and his merry shoemakers, who move in a world just tinged with the rosy hues of romance. The second presents a contemporary 'blue-stocking,' Moll Cut-purse, in a sentimental spirit which is reminiscent of the writers of the eighteenth century. She is shown not as a thief and a vicious character, but as the reliever of the distressed and the humble knight (or dame) of honour. Nowhere more clearly is the sentimental note in the age pronounced. *Westward Ho* and *Northward Ho* are more realistic in the Jonsonian sense, and are decidedly less entertaining than Dekker's earlier individual efforts.

(iii) Later Realistic Comedy

The Jonsonian style with an added element of intrigue was taken over later by Fletcher, usually in association with Philip Massinger, and had already been adopted by Beaumont in one of his earliest dramas, *The Woman Hater* (*c.* 1606; printed 1607). This is an excellent comedy, well constructed and possessing a *verve* lacking in many of even the most realistic of these works. An interesting development is seen here in the elaboration of what may almost be counted a 'manners' note in the character of Oriana, with her airiness, her cleverness, and her wit; but the main atmosphere is that of 'humours,' Lazarillo, a courtier who adores strange viands, and Gondarino, the woman-hater, providing most of the *vis comica* of the piece. Noticeable are the Pandar scenes, which are reminiscent of the brothel scenes in *Pericles,* and the figures of the intelligencers, who remind us of similar characters in *Much Ado. The Womans Prize, or the Tamer Tam'd* (? *c.* 1605; printed 1647; ascribed to Fletcher alone) is a farcical sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew.* Here Petruchio is

carried to London, where he marries an English wife, and is, as the title indicates, subjugated by her. In *The Coxcomb* (*c.* 1609; printed 1647; ascribed to Beaumont and Fletcher with possible revision by another) there is more of a romantic note, as there is in *The Honest Mans Fortune* (1613; printed 1647; ascribed to Fletcher and Massinger), but the pure comic note reappears in *Wit Without Money* (*c.* 1614; printed 1639, ascribed to Fletcher alone), where the manners style is in even greater evidence. Gaiety, not bitterness, predominates in this play, the hero being a witty, impoverished, and fearless Valentine, who is in the end captured by the widow. The anti-matrimonial mood, the wit and the lightness of heart, differentiate this play from the Jonsonian model, and provide an intermediate link between the realistic comedy of 1600 and that of 1670. More of the satiric note is struck in *The Scornful Ladie* (*c.* 1615; printed 1616; ascribed to Beaumont and Fletcher, with the possibility of a Massinger revisal). *The Scornful Lady* is a well-wrought comedy, although the character of the lady, who is loved by Elder Loveless, is somewhat strained. The later, stung by her disdain, sets out on a voyage, leaving the riotous Younger Loveless his estate. News of his death is brought home, and the rascally brother rejoices. This theme is complicated not only by a series of humours in the persons of Morecraft the usurer, Abigal the wanton maid, and Savil the faithful steward debauched by Younger Loveless, but by many intrigues. After a series of disguisings and cross-purposes Elder Loveless marries the Lady; Welford, another suitor, her sister Martha; and Younger Loveless the Widow. The play is a clever one, but shows all the callousness and vice accumulating upon the age. We are far now from the pleasant freshness of *All Fools* or *The Shoemakers' Holiday*. *Wit at several weapons* (date uncertain; printed 1647; ascribed to Fletcher and another unidentified author) is even more Jonsonian in style. Here Sir Perfidious Oldcraft destines his niece for Sir Gregory Fopp. She eventually succeeds in marrying Cunningham. The humours of the two first named are added to by the clownish folly of Pompey

Doodle, the rascality of Witty-pate Oldcraft, the outworn gentility of Sir Ruinous Gentry, and the obtuseness of Credulous. Jonsonian humours of a kind come into *The Little French Lawyer* (*c.* 1619; printed 1647; ascribed to Fletcher and Massinger), particularly in the title figure of La Writt, who, from apparent timidity, develops into a *braggadocio,* but the atmosphere belongs in general rather to that of the romantic tragi-comedy. One of the most interesting plays of this series is *The Wild-Goose Chase* (1621; printed 1652; ascribed to Fletcher alone), which shows more clearly than any other play of the time the development of the manners style. The plot is one of intrigue, and humorous characteristics are to be traced in plenty, but that for which the comedy exists is the wit—no longer a wit of situation, but the genuine *esprit* that appears in Restoration dramas of a later date. The gaiety, the courtly dalliance, the anti-matrimonial humour of the hero, all point forward to the late seventeenth century. It was not mere chance that made Farquhar choose to adapt this play in his well-known comedy of manners, *The Inconstant.* This air of wit allied to high-flown theories concerning honour appears again in the tragi-comic *Nice Valour or The Passionate Madman* (? 1624; printed 1647; ascribed to Fletcher and another). Here Shamont, the Duke's favourite, has his mind filled with just such ideas as occupied the minds of Dryden's heroes. The portion of the play in which he and the Passionate Madman appear is more or less serious, but Jonsonian humour is shown plainly enough in the figure of Lapet, eternally engaged on his work concerning the taking of blows.

With Fletcher and his coadjutors we are no longer in the direct company of Jonson. Jonson is Elizabethan in his sturdiness, in his robust attitude toward life, Elizabethan even in his horror of vice. In Fletcher we can trace the weakening spirit of the age. Humours are copied from the earlier comedies, but not for the sake of satire; vice is indulged in for its own sake. Romanticism occasionally is employed to cover over situations nauseous and disgusting. Above all, comedy is moving in a new direction

toward wit. The Cavalier intellect is demanding something more than the manifestations of the comic exhibited in Elizabethan plays. With Fletcher, as we have seen, in wit, in callousness, in refined immorality, we are travelling from the largely emotional, coarser, yet fresher drama of the late sixteenth century to the borders of that territory which Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve made their own.

In pure comedy Philip Massinger's unaided efforts have less of the airy tone infused into Fletcher's plays. He is a closer follower of Jonson's style. *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (before 1626; printed 1633) is, indeed, one of the finest satiric dramas outside of Jonson's series. Massinger's masterpiece of portraiture is Sir Giles Overreach, a "cruel extortioner," who does not cease to live although he is a type. Overreach is, however, more individualistically delineated than the majority of Jonson's humours, and the influence of these humours is to be seen more plainly in the minor characters, Greedy, Marrall, Amble, Furnace, Watchall, Tapwell and Willdo. Deservedly the force of dialogue, the skill in construction, and the power of characterization in this drama have been unstintingly praised by Massinger's critics. Massinger's later comedy, *The City Madman* (1632; printed 1658), has something of the same force. Its didactic purpose it shares with *Eastward Ho,* the ambitious aims of Lady Frugal being satirized much as are those of Gertrude in the earlier play. The atmosphere of merchant-life is, likewise, in both the same, far enough away from Fletcher's gallant circles. There is little here of the spirit of the 'comedy of manners,' if we are to restrict that phrase to the only comedy to which it really belongs, the comedy of Congreve.[1]

Among the other writers in this style of realism, now frankly Jonsonian in inspiration, now moving toward the later style, only a few can be mentioned here, and those

[1] See p. 250; and *cf.* also *An Introduction to Dramatic Theory,* p. 184. The term 'manners' is very loosely used by most writers on the seventeenth century; examples of this loose use may be found in both Symonds and Schelling.

few treated in a summary manner. Middleton and Rowley, as we have seen, may be considered together, and it is probably the collaboration of these two which makes so many of the works passing under the former's name appear so disproportioned and unequal. *The Excellent Comedy, called The Old Law* (1599; printed 1656; probably written by Middleton and revised by Rowley and Massinger) exhibits these in a startling manner. The play as a whole is a poor one, but there are in it portions of true comic spirit and not a few touches of higher poetic power. Much finer is *Blurt Master-Constable. Or The Spaniards Nightwalke* (1601–2; printed 1602) with its racy prose scenes, but even this may be regarded as largely 'prentice-work. After a further experiment in *The Phœnix* (1603–4; printed 1607), a clear imitation of Jonson's style, Middleton passed on to pen his most brilliant comedy, *A Trick to Catch the Old-One* (*c.* 1605; printed 1608). There is nothing new here in the characterization, for the types all belonged to the common tradition of the stage. The humours, therefore, are old—the Lucres and Hoards and Lampreys and Moneyloves—but the dialogue is consistently fresh, and the plots are excellently and intriguingly developed. Akin to this play is the truly delightful *A Mad World, My Masters* (*c.* 1605; printed 1608), again filled with no new figures, but bustling with vitality and life. All of Middleton's plays have the same features—this sincere joy in existence, this love of easily delineated *dramatis personæ,* these many lapses from artistic refinement. His plays in their own way are typical of the age. The satiric note is absent here, yet all his dramas deal with vice, often vice of a callous and nauseating sort. Lacking the airy lightness of Fletcher's refinement, he seems more down in the mire of life, and there is a consequent want of delicacy in his work. *The Widdow* (date unknown; printed 1652), for example, shows a weakened moral tone in spite of the fact that it has been described as "curiously innocent, for a play by Middleton."

Of Rowley's own unaided work, *A Merrie and Pleasant Comedy: Never before Printed, called a Shoo-maker a*

Gentleman (*c.* 1608; printed 1638) shows in its subject-matter and even in its atmosphere the influence of Dekker. *A New Wonder, A Woman never vext. A Pleasant conceited Comedy* (date unknown; printed 1632) is probably a revision of an earlier play. Its chief interest is its serious and moral tone. The theme deals mainly with the imprisonment of Stephen, a character conceived in a distinctly sentimental strain. This Stephen, a spendthrift with a good heart, is released by Robert, his nephew, who is promptly disinherited by his over-righteous father, Old Foster. Stephen, on regaining his freedom, marries a rich widow, and Old Foster goes bankrupt. In his distress the father is aided by his son, and at length, like Lear, loses his self-righteous pride in a new sense of humanity. Jonson's influence is clearly to be seen in many of the characters, such as, for example, Innocent Lambskin and Sir Godfrey Speedwell; but Rowley felt too the impress of Shakespeare. The gilliflowers of Jane seem taken from *The Winter's Tale,* and the Host is a replica of the Host in *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* The general atmosphere, however, is his own, with its intensely moral and sentimental colouring. *A Match at Midnight* (date unknown; printed 1633) likewise seems to be a revised play, written originally, according to many critics, by Middleton. It is a mixture of the Jonsonian style moving toward the world of manners, and of intrigue. Bloodhound, a miser, is the chief character; he plans to marry the Widow, who has many suitors, but whose husband is eventually discovered in Jarvis. Bloodhound's daughter, Moll, marries Ancient Young, and Tim is paired off with Sue. The theme is a common one of marriage hunting and marriage deceits, but the number of passages which exist for the sake of their wit alone mark this comedy as moving in the same direction as those of Fletcher.

A comedy more of the intrigue type is given us in Jasper Mayne's *The Citye Match* (printed 1639), a fair work spoilt by too many disguises and complications. The only really well-drawn character in it is Aurelia, but the scenes wherein we are shown how Warehouse is cheated by his witty

nephew Plotwell are full of good fun. Infinitely less agreeable is Thomas Killigrew's *The Parson's Wedding* (1640; printed 1664), as foul a production as can be imagined. It would not have been mentioned here save that it forms a fitting illustration of the rapid degeneracy of the times. There is little wit in the dialogue, and the comedy as a whole can make an appeal only to those who place vulgarity in the stead of art. An interesting play of a more satirical tone is the anonymous *Lady Alimony, or the Alimony Lady* (printed 1659) with its peculiar structure and valuable comments on current conditions. *The Antiquary* (printed 1641) of Shackerley Marmion has in the midst of its atmosphere of humours something of a romantic touch. The disguising of the Duke reminds us of the adventures of a Haroun al-Raschid; but the characters of Lionel, the Antiquary, Petruchio, and Mocinigo are all conceived after the Jonsonian manner.

Such single comedies of varying characteristics recede in importance when we come to consider the realistic works of that last representative of the Elizabethans, James Shirley. Shirley is not always satiric in his art, but he does follow Jonson in introducing into many of his plays a distinctly contemporary tone. His very first play, *The Schoole of Complement* (1625; printed 1631), is in this style. A typically youthful production, it has no inherent unity, but passes from theme to theme in a hopelessly inconsequent manner. The main subject, however—the fantastic school where young gallants are taught to pay the most highly flowered compliments—is freshly and entertainingly treated. A more artistic construction is to be seen in *The Wittie Faire One* (1632; printed 1633), a comedy of considerable excellence, and at the same time full of that intellectual gallantry which at its best rises to wit and at its worst sinks to crass vulgarity. The attitude of the sexes to one another is to be noted in these plays of Shirley and in other dramas of the time. In the Middle Ages the Courts of love had made of woman an ideal, something apart from life; the Renascence brought with it the conception of masculine and feminine equality. For a time in the

Elizabethan period that equality was viewed in the light of emotion and passion; but as the age moved forward intellect came to take the place of this emotion, and common sense reigned. Nowhere, possibly, is this common-sense and intellectual attitude to be seen more clearly than in Shirley's comedies of social life. "Come," says the gallant Fowler to Penelope in this particular play, "remember you are imperfect creatures without a man; be not you a goddess; I know you are mortal, and had rather make you my companion than my idol; this is no flattery now." The atmosphere of Rosalind and Orlando, of Ferdinand and Miranda, has become a thing of the past. Shirley's comedies of later date all continue in the same strain. *Changes: Or Love in a Maze* (1632) was deservedly famous in its own time, and is noteworthy for the witty satire presented through the medium of Caperwit. *Hide Parke* (1632; printed 1637) deals again with a contemporary world of wit, and *The Lady of Pleasure* (1635; printed 1637) makes clever use of contemporary social follies. The latter play contains an interesting study of a woman type later to occupy many comedies; Celestina has many of the features of heroines in the comedy of manners.

Among the lesser writers—the works of whom may be noted here without much comment—Nathaniel Field, the actor, and Richard Brome deserve first mention. Field had been a performer in several of Jonson's plays, and it is not surprising to find that humours predominate in *A Woman is a Weathercocke* (1610; printed 1612) and in *Amends for Ladies* (*c.* 1611; printed 1618). Both show the influence of Shakespeare besides that of Jonson, and, charming as are many of the scenes, it cannot be denied that Field has failed to discover a flux which might fuse together these so opposing elements. His two plays are carelessly constructed and preserve their interest only for separate scenes or passages of dialogue.

Richard Brome is even more Jonsonian in his efforts—a natural outcome of the fact that he had been for some years a servant to the great Ben. Several of his plays remained popular successes well on into the eighteenth

century, and it is to be recognized that he had no small talent for the stage. Most important of all, he had a certain inventive power which led him to draw the Jonsonian comedy, as Fletcher did, toward the realm of the comedy of manners, and this in spite of a decidedly coarser style and outlook than that exhibited by his master. Of his nineteen plays two may be mentioned here, *The Northern Lasse* (printed 1632) and *A Joviall Crew: Or, The Merry Beggars* (1641; printed 1652). The first was Brome's primal effort and shows him, like Field, engaged in the endeavour to fuse together the satirical strain of Jonson and some elements of romantic fervour. The second has great interest because of its picaresque theme, which is treated with all the coarseness and vitality which such a subject usually demands.

A brief backward glance at the general contents of this chapter will serve to show that the Jonsonian satiric comedy in its purest form did not find very many direct successors. On the other hand, there were several movements in drama between 1600 and 1642 which often coalesced with his style. There was, first, the fresh comedy of the Dekker type, which dealt in a somewhat sentimental way with the lives of the lower and middle classes. This form of comedy is one of the most delightful that the age produced, but it was destined to be crushed out of existence by the vice and corruption rapidly growing upon the Cavalier element in society. The comedy of intrigue, too, frequently adopted a realistic instead of a romantic tone, and so merged with the Jonsonian type. This comedy of intrigue, however, dealt usually with upper-class characters, and out of it there developed, inspired by the changing tastes and manners of the time, a sort of comedy of manners, not fully dissociated as yet from the rougher forms of earlier drama, but leading forward toward Etherege. Nearly all the realistic comedies are marred by coarseness and vulgarity, thus displaying the evil that was growing in power throughout those years; but in spite of that vulgarity we must recognize that the realism served a good purpose in its day. It helped to keep drama close to real life at a time

when many writers were striving by their romantic plots and characters to make of the theatre an artificial and fantastic thing, and its very coarseness aided in preserving a touch of moral sanity as opposed to the decadent emotions and lubricity of the Fords and others who descended to the most disgusting and nauseating of sexual emotions. The satire in the Jonson drama did little good directly in the way of mitigating the abuses of the age, but it proved a most salutary element in the world of the theatre.

CHAPTER IV

SHAKESPEARIAN TRAGEDY

FROM the above rapid analysis of comedy and of tragi-comedy in the first half of the seventeenth century a return must be made to the realm of tragedy, where will be found exemplified in varying ways many of the tendencies which have already been noted in the other forms of drama. This period includes the chief works of Shakespeare, and it must be our endeavour to regard those works for their own sakes and for their importance as documents in the consideration of dramatic history.

The series of Shakespearian tragedies (considered apart from the history plays) starts well back in the sixteenth century with the doubtful drama entitled *The most Lamentable Romaine Tragedie of Titus Andronicus* (1594), and proceeds through the *Excellent conceited Tragedie of Romeo and Iuliet* (? 1595; printed 1597), *The Tragedie of Iulius Cæsar* (1599; printed 1623), *The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke* (? 1601; printed 1603 and (1604), *The Historie of Troylus and Cresseida* (?1602; printed 1609, and as a "Tragedie" 1623), *The Tragœdy of Othello* (?1604; printed 1622), *The Tragedie of Macbeth* (*c.* 1606; printed 1623), *the True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King Lear and his three Daughters* (1605; printed 1608), *The Tragedie of Anthonie, and Cleopatra* (*c.* 1606; printed 1623), and *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* (*c.* 1606; printed 1623) to *The Lyfe of Tymon of Athens* (*c.* 1607; printed 1623). As is obvious, *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet* stand apart by reason of their date and their consequently independent characteristics, while in the greater group we find two classes of plays, the Roman tragedies and the four masterpieces, *Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth,* and *King Lear.* It may, for our purpose, be most convenient to discuss these plays in their separate sections.

Titus Andronicus has probably but little to do with Shakespeare; if it has large parts from his pen the sooner it is forgotten the better. Thoroughly melodramatic, full of the most blood-curdling horrors, it conveys no evidence of a settled idea in the author's mind as to the true nature of tragedy. Its one aim is to shock the audience by the most horrible means possible, and in this it certainly succeeds. Had it not been included in the Shakespeare canon it is unquestionable that all critics of the Elizabethan drama would either have ignored it or styled it one of the most revolting plays of the late sixteenth century. As an historical document, on the other hand, it has its own interest. It shows to us the crude tastes of the spectators of Shakespeare's time, for, in view of the fact that three quartos were issued before the appearance of the First Folio text of 1623, we cannot but believe it to have been a popular drama. Love of crude horror is evidently as marked a feature of the audience of 1595 as love of artistically stressed horror is of the audience of 1635.

Romeo and Juliet, on the other hand, is a true work of dramatic art, even if there are in it many failings due to the inexperience of the writer. Its lyrical passion at times rises to the heights of ecstasy, and the comic matter, both of the more refined sort in Mercutio and of the coarser texture in the Nurse, is excellently managed. This tragedy is obviously a young man's effort and shows the fullness of Renascence thought and passion. In spite of its lyricism it is of the earth. There is no spiritual message here, no mental struggles, no wearied emotion that almost reaches the levels of mysticism as in *Macbeth* and in *Hamlet.* The love of Romeo and Juliet is an earthly passion, and the whole colour of the play is rich with those dazzling hues which we associate with fifteenth-century Italy. These features separate *Romeo* markedly from the later tragedies; but there are besides these features of difference of even greater importance. Here Shakespeare has not as yet formulated his true tragic spirit. He is filled with the joy of Renascence imaginings; his poetry flows in a clear stream of impassioned eloquence; but of higher conception

there is none. The tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* might, after all, have been a comedy. Mercutio did not need to die; little lies between the two lovers and a happy existence. There is nothing wrong in their actions; there is nothing wrong in their grasping at this youthful passion. They are merely star-crossed; fate and even chance thwart their best-considered plans. They are mere puppets in the hands of a power greater and more majestic than themselves. This form of tragedy of fate is the typical type of Greek drama; but there are æons between the spirit of *Œdipus* and the spirit of *Romeo*. The Greek tragedy owed its greatness partly to the awful religious conceptions of the time, to the idea of some power or powers governing human lives and human actions, partly to the fusion of mortal error, the ἁμαρτία of Aristotle, with this fatal power. With Shakespeare fate as such is simply not conceived; we do not rise from a reading of *Romeo and Juliet* with the feeling that some tremendous power stands over our petty lives; we rise with the feeling that some blind chance has obstructed wildly the deeds of these two lovers. There is not the profound majesty of Greek drama leading to emotions that are full of terror and sublimity; there are only the petty movements of a conscienceless power that leaves us rebellious and dissatisfied. *Romeo and Juliet* is a fine tragedy, but it is such only because of the poetry that breathes in its every scene. It is Shakespeare's greatest *tour de force*.

In *Hamlet* and the other three plays of his highest power this atmosphere is changed for another, in which there is evidence that there had come to him a new conception of tragedy. Here fate may be suggested, but fate causes the downfall of none of these tragic heroes. Their fate, after all, is their own, and remains their own even while we recognize that each is faced with peculiar and for him insurmountable difficulties. There is here, that is to say, the same union of fate and human failing which is to be discovered in Sophocles. An outline, even a brief outline, of the fundamental forces in each of these four plays would occupy much more space than this volume can afford.

These are plays, moreover, with which almost every one is acquainted, and it may be sufficient for our purpose here to indicate briefly some of the ways in which these dramas fall in with the general theatrical tendencies of the time.

Hamlet, as has been hinted before, is an offspring of Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy.* Whether Kyd himself wrote a tragedy on this theme is uncertain; but we know of the existence of a 'Hamlet' play at least as early as the year 1589. Henslowe's lists inform us that it was revived in 1594. The probability is that this *"Ur-Hamlet"* was the production of Shakespeare himself and was the foundation of the later *Hamlet,* reworked about 1601 and later revised about 1602. This tragedy, then, belongs to the series of revenge plays inaugurated by Kyd about 1589. The first *Hamlet,* as we know from the 1603 quarto, possessed little of the introspective philosophy of the later; in action it was similar to the other, but it lacked almost entirely those higher qualities which have seized upon the imaginations of all ages from the Elizabethan to the present day. These introspective meditations, however, would not seem to have been of Shakespeare's own invention. The play of *Hamlet* would probably have been almost entirely forgotten had it not been for the production in 1599 of Marston's *History of Antonio and Mellida* (printed 1602), followed by *Antonios Reuenge* (printed the same year). Both of these are crude plays, but together they display some peculiar and remarkable characteristics. In the first Antonio appears disguised as an Amazon, revealing himself only to Mellida. His disguise is discovered by Piero, and he only just succeeds in escaping in the habit of a sailor. Mellida flies after him, but is captured; and Piero closes the play by pretending to let his vengeful thoughts die. The second part is full of torment. Piero treacherously poisons Andrugio, murders Feliche, slanders his own daughter, and makes love to Maria. Antonio is faced by the spirit of his father, and plots his revenge. He succeeds first in murdering the little Julio and then gets Piero killed in a masque. The plot is incoherent and difficult to follow;

none of the characters are satisfactorily delineated; but certain features attract our interest. There is, in the first place, the ghost of a murdered father appearing to a son; there is plenty of feigned madness; there is a general disgust at life; there is the weakness of a mother; there is a play within a play; and there are, besides, passages which were evidently in Shakespeare's mind in this richest period of his career. It is not too much to say that in *Antonio and Mellida* we have evidence that the melancholy and apparent disgust at the world of which so much has been made by the more sentimental and imaginative biographers of Shakespeare was nothing more or less than a literary pose probably aroused by the success of Marston's dramas. In *Hamlet* Shakespeare has taken over the *Antonio and Mellida* atmosphere, and has made it live; he has, given to the revenge theme a higher purpose; he has, above all, formulated for tragedy a central and a dominant aim. It is peculiar to note that in this play, which seems so filled with deepest and profoundest expression of tragic thoughts, Shakespeare should have introduced a scene which at once links the drama as a whole to the *Poetaster-Satiromastix* controversy. The quarrel between the adult players and the children for whom Jonson was at that time writing is inserted, without any thought of historical accuracy, into the midst of *Hamlet's* meditations—an artistic defect, but one which serves to prove still further the independence of Shakespeare in this world of gloomy thoughts and suicidal imaginings.

Othello presents an entirely different set of characteristic elements. Here is no gloom, but passion of the most tremendous sort. Shakespeare's central purpose in tragedy is, however, still preserved; once more the tragedy is a variation on a set theme. *Othello* is notable for its structure, a structure determined no doubt by the nature of the plot, but at the same time possibly showing the influence of the new theories concerning play construction which at the time were being put forward by Jonson and others of the neo-classical school. *Othello* has interest, moreover, because of its theme. *Hamlet, Macbeth,* and *King Lear* deal with

princely characters and scenes; *Othello* presents to us a Moorish general, a high-born Venetian maiden, and a distinctly low-born ancient. The atmosphere of the tragedy is decidedly not 'royal,' and it may be that here there was being exercised on Shakespeare some influence from the group of domestic tragedies later to be considered.

In *Macbeth* there are many problems. The structure is not nearly so fine as that of *Othello,* but in the swiftness of its opening and in its gradual close it appears almost a counterpart to the other play. The text is certainly not so good as that of *Othello,* and it is possible that we have to make allowances for later additions inserted by some unthinking and sacrilegious writer. In *Macbeth* we find the same cardinal tragic idea, exemplified this time in the figure of a noble but ambitious and weak-willed Scottish general. Unquestionably the theme approved itself to Shakespeare because of the recent ascension to the throne of James VI of the house of Stuart. Topical references designed to flatter the pedantic and superstitious monarch abound in this play. James had written a book on *Demonology,* and so witches appear. The curing of the 'King's evil' is narrated at a time of emotional stress quite needlessly. A plain allusion to the union of the crowns is introduced into the prophetical visions called into being by the three weird hags. We can hardly imagine that Shakespeare drew in all of these because he thought they would improve his play; yet *Macbeth* remains one of the greatest tragedies of all time.

With *King Lear* we note a distinct retrogression, in spite of many deep thoughts and a characterization unequalled in Shakespeare's other works. For some reason the firmly knit structure of *Othello* is forgotten; and a reversion is made to the old formless technique of the chronicle history. There is little of the concentration of unity visible in the two preceding tragedies, and as a consequence *Lear* is less of a dramatic masterpiece than those. It possesses epic characteristics ill adapted for stage representation. This, of course, does not take away from the fact that *Lear* is one of the greatest of all works of genius; as a dramatic

poem it has never been surpassed, even if as a drama it has many weaknesses and blemishes. In regard to the subject of this play it may be noted that Shakespeare once more seems to have been following a fashion of the time. In the first years of the seventeenth century scenes of early Britain proved immensely popular, probably because of the fact that patriotic pride was flattered by the thought of ancient Trojan greatness and of British valour. Whatever the cause, *King Lear, Cymbeline, Bonduca,* and others of the same type proved extremely successful on the stage, the love for such plays enduring to as late a date as 1633, when Jasper Fisher's *Fuimus Troes* was presented at Oxford.

Turning to the Roman plays we find no fewer points of relationship with current fashion. The Renascence was partly at least a revival of interest in classical life and literature, so that it was but natural that some attention should be paid to works such as Plutarch's *Lives.* Romanticists and classicists here met as one, Ben Jonson penning his *Sejanus* and *Catiline,* Fletcher his *Valentinian,* Massinger his *Roman Actor,* and Shakespeare his *Julius Cæsar* and *Coriolanus.*

Julius Cæsar, derived directly from North's rendering of Plutarch with very questionable hints from Appian's *Civil Wars,* was written on the most popular of all these Roman themes. The figure of Cæsar himself, his association with Britain, and the tragic story of his death all contributed to make this a subject eminently acceptable to English audiences. In this tragedy we can discern Shakespeare just on the borders of his greatest and fullest utterance. There are many finely drawn characters in the play; there is a certain unity of conception; but as a whole the drama just fails to rise to the heights of true tragic dignity. There is, in the first place, the lack of a central figure. In one way Cæsar is the hero, yet he does not in person dominate the whole play. In another way Brutus is the hero, yet he has to share his place with the conqueror. Moreover, if Brutus is to be regarded as the main figure on whom the tragic action devolves we find that Shakespeare's conception is not

that which is exemplified in his immediately following plays. Brutus is not faced with a difficulty he cannot master. He is placed in a dilemma and acts in the only way possible for him. This difference in idea takes away from the emotion of tremendous awe which is visible in the other tragedies. We realize that

> This was the Noblest Roman of them all:
> All the Conspirators saue onely hee,
> Did that they did, in enuy of great *Cæsar:*
> He, onely in a generall honest thought,
> And common good to all, made one of them,

but we cannot summon up in ourselves the true tragic passion in witnessing his fall. The same dissatisfaction is left in our minds as when we witness *Romeo and Juliet.* At the same time, we may see Shakespeare moving in this play toward his final conception of tragedy. He interweaves into the force of character the force of supernatural powers. Cæsar and Brutus meet their deaths through their own actions and through the actions of other men; yet there is continually hinted in the play that somehow the happenings of this earth are related to unseen and tremendous presences. The warning given to Cæsar, the apparitions in the streets of Rome, all add to this feeling. Shakespeare has moved from the realm of direct and somewhat crude enunciation to that of artistic and subtle suggestion.

Leaving *Troilus and Cressida* for the moment we come next to *Antony and Cleopatra,* written after the series of *Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth,* and *King Lear,* and forming as it were a sequel to the first Roman play. In structure *Antony and Cleopatra* belongs to the type of *King Lear.* It is formed on the plan of the chronicle history, and, fine as the drama is, one is tempted to believe that had it been written alongside of *Othello* it would have taken on an added dignity and majesty of conception. This, it is to be noted, is the only one tragedy of Shakespeare's maturity which deals with the theme of love. Love in general is fatal to the true tragic atmosphere, as may be seen in the pitiful plays of the early eighteenth century; and Shakespeare,

consciously or unconsciously, has sought to make harder the impression of the play as a whole by emphasizing the essential nobility of the hero and heroine at the close. The tragedy lies in Cleopatra's ill-use of that charm which even her critics could not but realize would never be withered by age or staled by custom. Nor would it have been to Shakespeare's purpose to have made her merely a fascinating syren; in the last scene when, Antony lost, she applies the asp to her arm Shakespeare has retained almost unaltered the original words of Plutarch, from whose general conception of Cleopatra's character he had in the main consistently differed. So, too, Antony's greatness is revealed to us even in the moments of his vacillation.

> Come,
> Let's haue one other gawdy night!

he cries before the final battle which is to undo him; yet a moment before he had shown himself a very Macbeth in his true martial enthusiasm:

> I will be trebble-sinewed, hearted breath'd.

Antony and Cleopatra will assuredly remain one of the most tremendous of all love tragedies; yet even Shakespeare could not raise the type to the height of his other masterpieces. It is beautiful; but it has not the rich gloom and august colouring of his other works.

If *Antony and Cleopatra* is somewhat too rich in some of its scenes, *Coriolanus* is at times rather austere. The structure of the play is by no means neo-classical, yet the general atmosphere is nearer to *Sejanus* than to *Julius Cæsar*. Once more Shakespeare turned to deal with a theme of pride, even as he had done in *King Lear,* for it is obviously the pride, the love of reputation, and the contempt of popular opinion of Coriolanus which brings about his downfall. He is thoroughly disgusted at anything which savours of outward flattery, as when he declares that he

> Had rather haue one scratch my Head i' th' Sun,
> When the Alarum were strucke, then idly sit
> To heare my Nothings monster'd,

and yet he delights unconsciously in the esteem in which

he is, and in which he feels he ought to be, held. In this he differs from the praise-loving Lear, but he shares Lear's lack of subtlety, as when he sweeps aside the moderate counsel of Menenius, or as when he pours out the torrent of his wrath on the senators of Corioli:

> Boy, false Hound:
> If you haue writ your Annales true, 'tis there,
> That like an Eagle in a Doue-co[a]t, I
> Flutter'd your Volcians in *Corioles*.
> Alone I did it, Boy.

Coriolanus is the last of this great group of tragedies. *Timon,* which followed, is manifestly an incoherent production and almost certainly was tampered with by some one after Shakespeare had written it. As it stands, it in no wise deserves to be considered along with the rest. We are left, therefore, with the strange *Troilus and Cressida.* The story is a medieval one, but Shakespeare, like Chaucer, no doubt received it as equally authentic with Homer's *Iliad.* This theme has something of the same appeal as those of early British heroes. The love of Trojan valour goes along with the desire to trace in the English race relics of the burning Ilium. In this play are mingled lyricism, coarseness, satire, and a seeming pessimism; but the combination cannot be used to illustrate Shakespeare's mood at the time of writing it. To present the Greeks as cowards tallies with the adulation of the Trojans; to adopt a darkened attitude toward life and love merely follows a current fashion for melancholy. At the same time, the play as it stands is a peculiar one, and possibly Sir Walter Raleigh's supposition that certain portions of it were written about the time when *Romeo and Juliet* was being penned will come to be accepted as the true explanation of the incoherencies and inconsistencies of the work. By this theory the juxtaposition of fine lyrical passion and of utter vulgarity might satisfactorily be accounted for. *Troilus* is an interesting but not a great play. It is full of the most penetrating thought, yet as a whole it fails to secure that true unity of impression necessary in all great drama whether romantic or classic.

Shakespeare's endeavour in tragedy has thus been seen to be broad and variegated, but from an analysis of his chief plays we can perhaps indicate in a summary form some of the main elements in his conception of tragic drama. (1) Tragedy for him is not a thing of love. His finest plays put love far into the background. (2) It is built up on a union of character and fate. The tragic hero has the fatal ἁμαρτία, yet is placed in such circumstances that his ruin is assured. (3) Violent and vivid action on the stage move alongside of mental conflict. *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are melodramas if we consider their plots alone, but derive their greatness from the union of thought and emotion with action. (4) The tragic hero is placed in a position such as no other character in the tragedy holds. He becomes not a superman, as with Marlowe's heroes, but a figure standing high above his companions.

No one was to follow Shakespeare in this line of tragic development. No one succeeded in catching the true spirit of his drama, although many of his immediate followers borrowed hints from him, and revealed in phrase and scene and character the influence of his example.

CHAPTER V

THE REVENGE PLAY

THE type of drama of which *Hamlet* is an example proved so popular all through the early seventeenth century that a separate chapter is required for a consideration of the form. We have already glanced at three specimens of this class, *The Spanish Tragedy, Antonio and Mellida,* and *Hamlet;* perhaps *Alphonsus* and *The Jew of Malta* might be included as a fourth and a fifth. Before the end of the sixteenth century many dramas of this species must have been in existence, but the majority of these have irretrievably perished. The popularity of the revenge play is probably due to two forces, usually antagonistic to one another—the romantic love of incident and the neo-classic desire to follow Greek and Latin models. The one found satisfaction in witnessing the duplicities and scenes of horror which inevitably are associated with this type of drama; the other was delighted to see some following of Sophoclean and Senecan models. In mentioning Sophocles it must, of course, be remembered that in Elizabethan times knowledge of the Greek dramatists was extremely limited. Occasionally one can trace what appear to be reminiscences of scenes in Athenian plays, but for the most part the Greek influence was exerted at second-hand. Seneca, after all, was for the Elizabethans the classic dramatist *par excellence,* and from him they took their revenge themes, their ghosts, and their horrors. Orestes and Atreus became the models for all the Hieronimos and the Hamlets of the age. This delight in the revenge themes may have another cause. The Elizabethans, subconsciously, were eager to witness the revelation of peculiar states of mind, and those peculiar states of mind could nowhere better be shown than in plays of this type. They had a strange love of melancholy, and melancholy is often

associated with the desire for revenge. In all ways, therefore, the revenge form was bound to prove popular, and exercised its fascination on men of such diverse genius as Kyd, Marston, Shakespeare, Webster, and Tourneur.

Among the earlier dramas built on this theme Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman or A Revenge for a Father* (*c.* 1602; printed 1631) is one of the most interesting, if not one of the best written, with its bloody-minded hero who fails in his full purpose only through his fatal flaw in loving a woman who in the end causes his ruin. Chapman is another who gave variety to the type in his tragedy called *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (*c.* 1610; printed 1613), the sequel to *Bussy D'Ambois* (1604; printed 1607). Although not connected with this in the adoption of a revenge story, Chapman's other tragedies may here be mentioned—*The Conspiracie, and Tragedie of Charles Duke of Byron* (1608) and *The Tragedie of Chabot Admirall of France* (*c.* 1613; printed 1639). The remarkable points about these four plays are the choice of themes from almost contemporary French history and the peculiar presentation of character. The first is a fine poetic tragedy, lacking only in a general unity of impression. The characterization of Bussy himself is well carried out, although his *liaison* with Tamyra, the wife of Montsurry, hardly entitles him to favour in modern eyes. His death seems not the result of a human failing, but well merited because of his own actions. In the sequel Baligny and Clermont D'Ambois are displayed as revenge heroes plotting the ruin of those who had dispatched the latter's brother. The plot moves forward in a series of hesitating steps. Clermont is arrested, but released again. He succeeds in murdering Montsurry, and finally commits suicide after securing the death of the Guise. The Umbra Bussy is presented on the stage in time-honoured manner, but its crudeness, when contrasted with the subtlety of Shakespeare's method, rather spoils the general tone of the play. The Byron drama is noteworthy mainly for its delineation of the hero's character, particularly in his last scenes, and might in this respect be compared with *Chabot*. In the latter Chapman deals

as in *Bussy D'Ambois* with Court rivalry and the opposing forces of evil and honesty. Chabot is tried, and his enemies, with their corrupt practices, are exposed, but he dies of a broken heart because of the suspicion of his King. The theme has interest in the presentation of a low-born favourite who, instead of engaging in corrupt intrigues and self-aggrandisement, is the very mirror of uprightness and honesty. The play fails, however, because of the very goodness of the hero. All of Chapman's dramas have this central deficiency. Tragedy for him is merely a tale of opposing forces, ending in death; it is not the record of a mental conflict or the ruin consequent on some human failing. He has none of Shakespeare's subtlety, none of Shakespeare's high conception of drama.

With many variations the revenge theme was taken up by other dramatists. It appears, for example, in a slightly disguised and novel form in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maides Tragedy* (*c.* 1611; printed 1619), a play obviously reminiscent of Shakespeare, but showing the decaying fabric of the age. The plot is a simple one. Amintor is married by the King's command to Evadne. He discovers that in reality she is the unashamed mistress of his monarch. Thoughts of revenge surge in upon him, only to be stifled at the thought of that divinity which hedges in a king. Evadne, however, is herself wrought into repentance, and in her horror she murders her lover, only to realize that her crime repels her friends from her. The interest in peculiar marital and sexual relationships is here; there are the stock characters of the later drama; there is the rich poetry surrounding objectionable themes. We cannot but confess that this is a finely written play; but at the same time we cannot admit that it is a great tragedy. Its atmosphere, in spite of the intensity of the passions, is close to that of the romantic tragi-comedy. Several other of the Beaumont and Fletcher series may also be considered here. The weakness that lies in the direct introduction of the supernatural and the close association between the worlds of romance and of tragedy in these years is plainly exemplified in *Cupid's Revenge* (? 1612; printed 1615), a play of tragic

import, but wanting entirely in the true spirit of tragedy proper. Here a Duke's daughter denies the power of Cupid. The god, resenting this slight, comes to the earth and causes her to fall in love with a dwarf and eventually die of grief. The action is further complicated by the fact that Cupid, not content with this vengeance, makes the son love Bacha, a prostitute, and concludes by causing the Duke to marry her. The intrigues of this woman lead to a universal catastrophe. *The Bloody Brother, or Rollo Duke of Normandy* (date uncertain; printed 1639; ascribed to Massinger, Fletcher, Jonson, and Field) likewise deals in part with a theme of revenge, and, in spite of an incoherence in structure due partly to the collaboration of various authors, deserves remembrance for the character of Edith. In *The Tragedy of Thierry King of France, and his Brother Theodoret* (date unknown; printed 1621; attributed to Fletcher and Massinger) there is again something of the revenge motive, allied to elements of decadence and horror. Brunhalt is a monster of vice and is angered by Theodoret's upbraidings. She flies to his brother Thierry, and at his Court peace is apparently made between the mother and the son. A marriage is arranged between Thierry and Ordella, and the mother gives him a disgusting drug, which she follows up with a murderous blow to one of her sons and a fatal dose of poison to the other. Many scenes in this play remind us forcibly of Shakespeare, particularly that last passage when Ordella, who, like Hero and Hermione, has been preserved by a friend when all believed her dead, wakens to utter a last few words to the expiring Thierry. The broken, short sentences, the phrases "Oh happy, happy soul . . . Can spirits weep too? . . . The same still, still your servant," recall at once the Lear-Cordelia scenes of earlier date. How far Fletcher had descended, however, is amply evident in this weakly constructed play. The delineation of character is little more than amateurish, Brunhalt being an impossible monster and Theodoret merely vapid. The murder of the latter in Act III is unpremeditated and wholly unexpected, and his last words are simply foolish. The tragedy is nothing

but a miserable *pièce de théâtre*. Revenge motives allied to Machiavellian intrigues appear in *The Knight of Malta* (*c.* 1618; printed 1647; attributed to Fletcher, Massinger, and another), a play of the tragi-comic cast. The characters here are again mere stock types; there is the struggle between love and honour; there is the juxtaposition of exaggerated goodness and sensuality. The plot devolves from the tempting of Oriana by Mountferrat. On her refusal he publishes a slander against her and is challenged by her lover Gomera. Oriana and Gomera marry, but the latter's mind is poisoned by the treachery of Zanthia. The play being a tragi-comedy, reconciliation of a somewhat unnatural kind closes the action.

The revenge play in even more startling forms continued long to exercise its popularity in the hands of Webster, Tourneur, and others. John Webster is to be regarded as one of the most inspired playwrights of this period, although his tragedies all lack force and concentration of purpose. After an early career of work in collaboration with others, he engaged as an independent playwright in *Appius and Virginia* (*c.* 1608; printed 1654), an unimportant piece, *The White Divel; Or, The Tragedy of Paulo Giordano Ursini, Duke of Brachiano, With the Life and Death of Vittoria Corombona the famous Venetian Curtizan* (*c.* 1610; printed 1612), and *The Tragedy of the Dutchesse of Malfy* (*c.* 1614; printed 1623). Both of the latter belong to the horror-play tradition, but the second at least is based on the theme of revenge, and both may be treated together here. The theme of the first is that of a woman of more than ordinary power who desires to gain for herself a wider and larger life. She is married, but, finding this larger life in her love for the Duke, she passes to crime. She aims at the death of her own husband and of the Duchess. Her character is well drawn, and Webster has ample opportunity for displaying his power over the darker side of poetry. The atmosphere of the play is dank and clammy, dark with a kind of cypress gloom, lit only at moments by lurid flashes of light. The woman figure in the second play is no monster. She, a duchess, marries

for love a steward named Antonio, and her brothers, full of aristocratic horror at the alliance, do all they can to break her spirit. She is immured, placed among madmen, and finally slain along with her children by Bosola. There is here some approach toward true tragic expression, although the subsidiary trappings of a melodramatic sort bring even the finest scenes of the play down from the levels of highest drama. Whatever defects we find in Webster's works, however, it cannot be denied that he is one of the few dramatists of the time who had an insight into the human heart, who was able to delineate individuals and not merely to sketch in rude types.

With Webster is usually associated Cyril Tourneur, whose *The Revenger's Tragœdie* (1607) and *The Atheist's Tragedie: Or The honest Man's Revenge* (*c.* 1608; printed 1611) bring us back to the more direct line of revenge dramas. The first, which was published anonymously and has been ascribed by some critics to Webster, is a true tragedy of the revenge-horror style. In the very first scene Vindice enters, characteristically, bearing in his hands the skull of his mistress, his "studies ornament," which he addresses as

> Thou shell of Death,
> Once the bright face of my betrothed Lady,
> When life and beauty naturally fild out
> These ragged imperfections.

As a play the tragedy is a good one, developing well the vengeance planned by this character, but once more the melodramatic trappings serve to take away much of the finer spirit of the drama. Thus, for example, Vindice dresses his skull in the garment of a lady, places it in a darkened room, smears the face with deadly poison, and entices in the amorous Duke. The scene has power in it, but power of a decadent sort:

> *Duke.* *Piato,* well done[.] hast brought her[?] What Lady ist?
>
> *Vind.* Faith my Lord a Country Lady, a little bashfull at first as most of them are; but after the first kisse my Lord the worst is past with them. your grace knowes now what you haue to doo; sha's some-what a graue looke with her—but——

Duke. I loue that best, conduct her.
Vind. Haue at all.
Duke. In grauest lookes the Greatest faultes seeme lesse.
Giue me that sin thats rob'd in Holines.
Vind. Back with the Torch; brother raise the perfumes.
Duke. How sweete can a Duke breath? age has no fault,
Pleasure should meete in a perfumed mist,
Lady sweetely encountred, I came from Court I must
bee bould with you oh, what's this, oh!
Vind. royall villaine, white diuill: *Duke.* Oh.
Vind. Brother—place the Torch here, that his affrighted eye balls
May start into those hollowes, Duke; dost knowe
Yon dreadfull vizard, view it well, tis the skull
Of *Gloriana,* whom thou poysonedst last.
Duke. Oh, tas poysoned me.
Vind. Didst not know that till now?
Duke. What are you two?
Vind. Villaines all three! . . . the very ragged bone,
Has beine sufficiently reuengd.
Duke. Oh *Hippolito?* call treason
Hip. Yes my good Lord, treason, treason, treason.
[*stamping on him.*
Duke. Then I'me betrayde.
Vind. Alasse poor Lecher in the hands of knaues,
A slauish Duke is baser then his slaues.
Duke. My teeth are eaten out. *Vind.* Hadst any left.
Hip. I think but few.
Vind. Then those that did eate are eaten. *Duke.* O my tongue.
Vind. Your tongue? twill teach you to kisse closer,
Not like a Flobbering *Dutchman,* you haue eyes still:
Looke monster, what a Lady hast thou made me,
My once betrothed wife.
Duke. Is it thou villaine, nay then . . .
Vind. T'is I, 'tis *Vindici,* tis I.

In *The Atheist's Tragedy* we find a similar atmosphere, dark poetry of a lurid kind coexisting with the crudest of horrors. The theme, however, is treated in a novel way, for, though the ghost of his murdered father returns to Charlemont, it is to bid him abstain from vengeance. In the end occurs an unrefined but interesting scene in which D'Ambville, the atheist, repents and confesses his sins.

The revenge play, as we have seen, became confused with the horror drama, and possibly the two can hardly

be dealt with separately, but for the purpose of tracing the main tendencies in seventeenth-century dramatic art it may be well to make some quite indeterminate division between the two types, while bearing in mind the fact that many revenge plays exist mainly for the sake of their tormenting scenes and many purely horror dramas include some strains of revenge motive.

CHAPTER VI

THE HORROR TRAGEDY

THE title of this chapter may to some appear a trifle arbitrary, and it is to be confessed that not all the plays here treated display the same characteristics; indeed, one may go farther and declare that not even all of them deal fundamentally with torment and horror. At the same time, this title seems best to indicate briefly the main tendencies operating upon the minds of many dramatists of the period and to delineate a general movement toward a weaker form of drama. The chief point in common among all the plays is the presence of a somewhat decadent mood and introduction of physical torture in and for itself. In *King Lear,* for example, the blinding of Gloucester can be dramatically justified; in most of these horror plays the scenes of torment do not further in any way the development of the plot. Moreover, in nearly all of these tragedies there is no attempt to secure a dominant tone; pathos is employed frequently, and there are the attempts at novelty in the delineation of the Courts of Roman emperors, as in Fletcher's *The Tragedie of Valentinian* (*c.* 1614; printed 1647), or those of Italian dukes, as in the plays of Massinger, or those of more romantic potentates, as in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* (*c.* 1610; printed 1620). Of true tragic expression in them there is, however, but little.

Massinger's four plays, *The Duke of Millaine* (printed 1623), *The Unnaturall Combat* (before 1623; printed 1639), *The Roman Actor* (1626; acted 1629), and *The Virgin Martir* (1620; printed 1622; written in collaboration with Dekker), may be regarded as some of the best dramas of a type between the Shakespearian and the decadent horror schools. The first contains a truly terrible villain in Francisco—one who can cry:

> Then we Raigne alone,
> For with this Arme I'le swim through Seas of blood,
> Or make a Bridge, arch'd with the bones of Men,
> But I will graspe my aymes in you my deerest,
> Deereest, and best of Women——

a threat which in the play he puts into execution; it contains, too, a scene of novel horror in the last act, when Francisco daubs the cheeks and lips of the dead Marcelia with poison and so contrives the death of Sforza. There are some touches of psychological insight in the play, but Massinger, as critics have often pointed out, does not really know men and women. His evil and his good alike leave us cold, so that Marcelia and Francisco, Eugenia and Sforza, remain more or less lifeless puppets. No less of horror is introduced into *The Unnatural Combat,* a play which adds to the horrible murder of a son by his father the still more horrible theme of incest. The play is one long series of torments suddenly cast into profoundest gloom after that last flash of lightning which destroys the unfortunate Malefort. In *The Roman Actor* the scene is changed to Rome of the days of Domitianus Cæsar, with a hero in the actor Paris. Without the employment of horror of the kind introduced into the last-mentioned play Massinger succeeds in conjuring up an atmosphere of equal darkness, of corruption, and of disgust. Spectacular effects are freely employed, as in the last act, when there is heard

> *A dreadfull Musicke sounding, Enter Junius Rusticius, and Palphurius Sura, With bloudie swords, they wave them over his head. Cæsar in his sleepe troubled, seemes to pray to the Image, they scornefully take it away . . .*

followed by *"Thunder and lightning."* The best scenes in the play are those in which Massinger's gift for rhetoric is allowed freest play, those when Paris pleads for his profession; but as a whole the tragedy does not rouse in us the deepest emotions.

The Virgin Martyr is at once a more interesting and a more peculiar play. It abounds in torture and death, but the character of Dorothea is well drawn, and the 'Christian' sentiment removes the tragedy partly from the

regular line of dramatic development. In its setting of Roman decadence, however, in its scenes of torment intermixed with the humours of Hircius and Spungius, in its employment of supernatural forces (Harpax, an evil spirit, follows Theophilus disguised as a secretary), it belongs to the same tradition.

Among the plays of Middleton *The Changeling* (1632; printed 1653; written in collaboration with Rowley) stands out for its villain De Flores, one who has an individuality of his own and is not merely a stock type. The story unfolds itself admirably. In order to marry Alsemero, Beatrice-Joanna commissions De Flores to murder Alonzo Piracquo. The murder is executed, but De Flores demands his reward. Beatrice shrinks from him:

> Why 'tis impossible thou canst be so wicked,

she cries,

> Or shelter such a cunning cruelty,
> To make his death the murderer of my honor.
> Thy language is so bold and vitious,
> I cannot see which way I can forgive it with any modesty.

His reply is cynical and adamant:

> Push, you forget your selfe, a woman dipt in blood, and talk of modesty.
> *Bea.* O misery of sin! would I had been bound
> Perpetually unto my living hate
> In that *Piracquo,* then to hear these words.
> Think but upon the distance that Creation
> Set 'twixt thy blood and mine, and keep thee there.
> *Def.* Look but into your conscience, read me there,
> 'Tis a true Book, you'l find me there your equall.

Something of the grandeur of Shakespeare's art enters into this work. Before the indulgence in her fatal error Beatrice feels a premonition of evil. Looking on De Flores, she realizes subconsciously to what he will bring her:

> I never see this fellow, but I think
> Of some harm towards me, danger's in my mind still,
> I scarce leave trembling of an hour after.
> The next good mood I find my father in,
> I'le get him quite discarded.

Peculiarly enough, too, there appear in this play dramatic touches such as Shakespeare knew how to use. In the scene where De Flores murders Alonzo we get, for example, that passionate repetition of a phrase which is so marked in *Macbeth* and in *Antony and Cleopatra:*

Alon. I am upon't.
Def. And so am I.
Alon. *Deflores,* oh *Deflores,* whose malice hast thou put on?
Def. Doe you question a work of secresie? I must silence you.
Alon. Oh, oh, oh.
Def. I must silence you.

In many ways *The Changeling* is one of the profoundest tragedies outside of the Shakespearian canon. Evil dominates it; but it is evil that breeds evil and consumes itself in its own villainy at the end. In *Women Beware Women* (1612; printed 1657) Middleton again essayed a study in this kind. Beyond the figure of the Cardinal there is hardly an honest character in the whole drama. The Duke of Florence, who falls in love with Bianca, the sensual wife of the poor Leantio, is a mere voluptuary. Bianca herself is absolutely unprincipled. Leantio is selfish enough to keep both his wife and his mother in want, while later in the play he succumbs to the allurements of Livia. A characteristically fine touch in the tragedy is that whereby the Cardinal, in all honesty reproaching the Duke for his association with Bianca, merely brings thoughts of murder into his brother's head. It is not too much to say, viewing these plays, that, dark as Middleton's atmosphere is, he comes as near to Shakespeare in tragic conception as do any of his contemporaries or followers.

Of the horror school proper, however, from which we have deviated slightly in this consideration of Middleton, Ford and Shirley remain the chief and culminating figures. In the former's four tragedies, *The Lovers Melancholy* (1628; printed 1629), *The Broken Heart* (*c.* 1629; printed 1633), *Loues Sacrifice* (*c.* 1630; printed 1633), and *Tis Pitty Shees a Whore* (*c.* 1624; printed 1633), we are thoroughly immersed in the world of romantic decadence. Ford has a feverish imagination; he may be a Shelley, as some critics

have affirmed, but a Shelley without the idealism. His love of dismal incident and nauseous sexual relationships mark him out as a product of an age of degeneracy. His first play is a tragi-comedy, cast in a rich romantic world (Famagosta in Cyprus) and replete with impossible and fantastic adventure. The interest in melancholy broodings and the general atmosphere of the piece relate this play more intimately to his tragedies than to the rest of his work in the tragi-comic strain. The piece is long-drawn out and frankly artificial, while the scenes where Thamasta falls in love with Eroclea disguised as a page make none too pleasant reading. This interest in strained states of mind is revealed by Ford in all his plays. *The Broken Heart* deals likewise with a couple of lovers, Orgilus and Penthea, divided from one another by Ithocles, who has made the latter marry the foolish Bassanes. Penthea determines not to be false to the husband she loathes, but pines away and finally dies. Meanwhile Orgilus plans his revenge, which takes a novel form calculated to appeal to the spectacle-loving audience of his time. Ithocles is caught in a cunningly designed chair, where he is murdered, and Orgilus, confessing his guilt, is sent to death. It is not to be denied that the play contains some powerfully affecting situations, as when Calantha learns of the deaths of her lover, her friend, and her father, but as a whole it is fetid and fantastic. Its unreality is only intensified by the whimsical catalogue of interpretations which Ford saw fit to append to his romantically named characters. Ithocles is the Honour of Loveliness, Orgilus is the Angry One, Calantha is the Flower of Beauty, Penthea is Complaint —so the list continues for the whole series of *dramatis personæ*. Revenge of a different sort is infused into the theme of *Love's Sacrifice,* a triangle drama involving Bianca, her husband Phillippo Caraffa, the Duke of Pavy, or Pavia, and Fernando, the Duke's favourite. The story is told with full panoply of spectacular incident, as when a "Tomb is opened" and Fernando steps forth in "his winding sheet." A masque is employed, as in *The Spanish Tragedy,* to accomplish the revenge plot. All the paraphernalia of

external horror and inner frenzy of spirit are wrought into one impassioned, but half madly impassioned, tragedy. *'Tis Pity* is possibly Ford's greatest, as it is his most disagreeable, play. The love of the brother and sister, Giovanni and Annabella, is not treated in any high poetic spirit. It is frankly sensual, and Ford seems to take a maddened delight in depicting it. Nor is the sensuality clothed in rich poetry as is the love of Romeo and Juliet; it is unashamed for all the wealth of rich words used. The terrible scene in which the two lovers fall on their knees in a frenzy of amorous passion has something of lunacy in it, and decadent thought is all that can explain the even more terrible scene at the opening of the second act, in which Giovanni, with all the callousness of a degenerate age, informs Annabella that she must marry. Possibly audiences of the time found sympathy for the guilty pair; if they did and pitied Annabella they could do so only out of their own diseased imaginations. The wheel in Ford has come full circle. The manly temper of that age which saw the battered ships of the Armada scudding helplessly northward, that age which produced Shakespeare and Spenser, has given way to a period of effeminacy, of degenerate thought, of maddened sensuality. From the dramatic point of view, also, Ford's dramas reveal the weakened spirit of his age. The novelties in the torments introduced upon the stage have no dramatic purpose; they are there merely to arouse feelings of curiosity and thrill in the hearts of a jaded public. So, too, in his treatment of minor characters. The weak-witted Bergetto in *'Tis Pity* meets his death by a stab in the back, and somehow his murder sends an emotion of dissatisfaction through us; the murder is not dramatically justified as, for example, was the murder of Polonius in *Hamlet*. The audience and the dramatists alike had forgotten what was necessary in a masterpiece of theatrical art.

Shirley's plays are less full of lunatic frenzies than Ford's, but they too show the decadence of the time. Six tragedies of his have come down to us, *The Maides Revenge* (1626; printed 1639), *The Traytor* (1631; printed 1635), *Loves*

Crueltie (1631; printed 1640), *The Dukes Mistris* (1636; printed 1638), *The Polititian* (? 1639; *printed* 1655), and *The Cardinall* (1641; printed 1653 in a set of *Six New Playes*, with separate title-page dated 1652). Only two of these, *The Traitor* and *The Cardinal*, are familiarly known to-day. The first of these two is set in a Court of Italy, the second in a Court of France. *The Traitor* is a story of wild and criminal ambition centring round Lorenzo (the historical Lorenzino de' Medici), who is represented as a villain engaging both the Duke Alexander and Schiarra in his intrigues. The play ends with a wild "heap of tragedies," to use the words of one of the few surviving characters—Schiarra, Amidea, Lorenzo, the Duke, and Petruchio all lying dead upon the stage. The finest scene possibly is that in which the dying Schiarra argues with his sister Amidea and in the end stabs her with his dagger. It cannot be said that this is not a skilfully constructed play; but there remains, as with all of these dramas, a sense of dissatisfaction. It is like "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying—nothing." *The Cardinal* is likewise a story of murder and inhuman cruelty. The title-figure is a villain of inhuman proportions, full of lust and bloodthirstiness. His words are calm and cynical, but in their very calmness unnatural:

> 'Tis in my brain already, and it formes
> Apace, good, excellent revenge, and pleasant!
> She's now within my talons, 'tis too cheap
> A satisfaction for *Columbo's* death,
> Only to kill her by soft charm or force,
> I'l rifle first her darling chastity,
> 'Twil be after time enough to poyson her,
> And she to th' world be thought her own destroyer.
> As I will frame the circumstance, this night
> All may be finished; for the Colonel,
> Her agent in my Nephewes death (whom I
> Disturb'd at Counsell with her) I may reach him
> Hereafter, and be Master of his fate.
> *We starve our Conscience when we thrive in State.*

All the characters seem to have become accustomed to a world of extraordinary crime, and poison is as natural to

them as eating or sleep. Thus we listen to the words of the Duchess:

> And yet
> He says he loves me dearly, and has promis'd
> To make me well again, but I'm afraid,
> One time or other he will give me poyson.

The very ordinariness of the phrasing arouses in our minds a sense of distrust and of disbelief. None of Shirley's other tragedies rise to the height of these, pitifully as these are below the tragedies of Shakespeare. Stock types are all that appear in the melodramatic Portuguese story of *The Maid's Revenge*. In *Love's Cruelty*, on the other hand, we reach something which is more than a mere play of lubricity. The tragic *dénouement* follows logically on the fatal weakness of Clarissa, and the characters, while not being presented with any highly individualized traits, are sufficiently interesting to make this tragedy of woman's curiosity almost unique among the later dramas. This play shows that it is not precisely the dealing with sin that makes the tragedies of Ford and the others weak and even disgusting, but the real lack of a true conception of tragic passion and purpose.

It is perhaps unnecessary to detail many of the other tragedies which follow in this line of development, but one or two of the later plays may be briefly indicated for their bearing upon the dramatic tendencies of the time. *The Fatal Contract* (date uncertain; printed 1653) of William Heminge, the son, it is said, of Shakespeare's fellow-actor, has an interest in its choice of theme and in its treatment of villainy, but hardly rises to any great levels of art. Sir John Suckling's *Aglaura* (printed 1638) and *Brennoralt* (printed 1646) must occupy a few lines of comment because of their popularity, partly, it is to be suspected, derived from the esteem in which their author was held as a literary man. The first is a rather poor romantic production in which a universal massacre befalls the characters in the fifth act. True to the spirit of the age, however, Suckling wrote an alternative conclusion to his play, in which, by the use of some ingenuity and at the cost of a good deal of

verisimilitude, these same characters are preserved alive and happy. An equally mythical Poland is the setting for the largely political tragi-comedy of *Brennoralt,* in which Suckling shows a considerably greater power over play construction and management of character.

Horror of a primitive kind appears in *A Tragedy called All's Lost by Lust* (*c.* 1616–9; printed 1633) by William Rowley. The theme is improbable, but some of the scenes are powerfully managed. The alliance of the father of the deflowered Jacinta with Mully Mumen is well wrought out, although the inhuman treachery of the Moor leaves us, in Jonson's words, "somewhat costive of belief." Nor do the horrors end with the Moor-Jacinta plot. The low-born Margaretta murders Lazaretto by mistake and finally commits suicide, while her bigamous husband Antonio is fatally wounded. Finely as some of the scenes are planned, the lack of a central purpose in the play destroys its general effect.

For the sake of the author, Sir William D'Avenant's two plays, *The Tragedy of Albovine, King of the Lombards* (written 1626; printed 1629) and *The Cruell Brother* (1627; printed 1630), may conclude this survey. Both are gloomy and murderous dramas, where lust, ambition, rapine, and violence fill out gruesome stories. In these tragedies D'Avenant shows himself the follower of Fletcher, Ford, Webster, and Shirley, steeping himself in the atmosphere of lust and criminality before he rose with others to the heights of artificial love and honour.

Several other plays there are, such as the anonymous *Second Maidens Tragedy* (1611; extant in manuscript and printed in the Malone Society publications) and *Nero* (1623; printed 1624), which display features calling for attention; but these features are all confined to individual scenes or characters. Even the best of these plays are marred by serious blemishes, and nearly all show the same series of thrilling or revolting situations, of unnatural climaxes and catastrophes, and of stock characterization. Here the romantic drama has run hopelessly to seed.

CHAPTER VII

THE DOMESTIC DRAMA

REACTION to the mood of artificial tragi-comedy and of equally artificial blood-and-thunder tragedy may be found in the school of realistic dramatists who strove to express their ideals now in the realm of the comic theatre, now in more serious dramas. It has been already pointed out, in the brief notice of *Arden of Feversham,* that realism of this sort was an inevitable outcome of the romantic theatre. Just as the Romantic Revival of the early nineteenth century led toward the excessive simplicity and naturalism of Wordsworth, so in the early seventeenth century the bizarre and florid features of the Fordian and Shirleian tragedies exist alongside of the crude simplicity of the realistic plays; and both are to be regarded as normal developments of the one, only half-conscious, theory of artistic expression. Both are opposed to the chill, the calm, and the unnatural dignity of the neo-classic stage.

In the field of domestic drama the early seventeenth century is not great; it produced no single masterpiece which might serve as a model for future writers. At the same time, in this period were written a number of plays which, while largely experimental and consequently tentative, formed a basis for the development of *bourgeois* drama in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Arden of Feversham,* in spite of the fact that it lacks a broader spirit and universal appeal, is a well-written drama, and the work of Dekker and of Heywood in this particular *genre* is by no means to be neglected. Before glancing at one or two of the typical productions in this style it may be noted that here we possess the one unquestioned contribution of the English stage to the dramatic form in general. After all, Shakespeare inaugurated nothing entirely new in the

world of the theatre; the Spanish drama was as romantic as his. In the domestic tragedy, on the other hand, there is something distinctively novel. Not France or Italy or Spain, leaving out of account Rome and Athens in classical times, had ever dreamt of a serious play which should be contemporary and topical. The importance of this fact becomes evident when we consider that the *bourgeois* drama has become in our own times the chief means of expression for tragic playwrights.

The first appearance of a truly great play of the crudely realistic type after the production of *Arden of Feversham* was *A Yorkshire Tragedy. Not so New as Lamentable and true* (*c.* 1606; printed 1608). This work, which contains only ten scenes, was part of a larger whole entitled *All's One, or, Foure Plaies in One,* a performance no doubt similar to Beaumont and Fletcher's *Four Plays, or Moral Representations in One* (date unknown; printed 1647), consisting of several short pieces bound together by some slight common tie. This type of performance, decidedly anti-classical in tendency, was popular in the last years of the sixteenth century, as we know from Henslowe's *Diary,* and preserved its popularity in D'Avenant's *The Play-House to be Lett* (*c.* 1663; printed 1673) and in Jacob's *The Nest of Plays* (1738). The type of performance may still be found, although without the common tie, in Grand Guignol *répertoires. A Yorkshire Tragedy* is, on the title-page, attributed to Shakespeare, but most critics are agreed in finding nothing of his hand in the drama. It is peculiar, however, that both of these early domestic tragedies should have been given to him, one by a contemporary printer and the other by a critic of the eighteenth century. The husband of this later play is a powerfully delineated type, and the crude realism of the work is given something of a monumental tone by his villainy, repentance, and final series of ghastly murders. There is an advance here on the characterization of *Arden of Feversham,* and there seems, in spite of the shortness of the piece, an attempt at securing some broader and loftier appeal.

Between the appearance of *Arden of Feversham* and this

drama not a few works of a similar type, but of a lesser value, had appeared. Records of what were evidently *bourgeois* tragedies now lost are to be found in Henslowe's *Diary;* and besides these bare records there have been preserved an anonymous drama styled *A warning for Faire Women* (printed 1599), Robert Yarington's [1] *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (printed 1601), as well as Thomas Dekker's *The Honest Whore* (Part I 1604, Part II *c.* 1605; printed 1604 and 1630) and Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Kilde with Kindnesse* (1603; printed 1607). *The Miseries of Inforst Mariage* (1607), by George Wilkins, is further a tragi-comic version of the theme of *A Yorkshire Tragedy,* and Heywood's *The English Traveller* (*c.* 1627; printed 1633) a later example of the serious domestic play.

The first and second of these dramas give really nothing new to the type. *A Warning for Fair Women* narrates the murder "of Master George Sanders of London Marchant, nigh Shooters hill"; the *Two Lamentable Tragedies* adds to a 'Babes in the Wood' theme the story of Merry's murder of Beech. Both are somewhat flamboyant productions and full of weak dialogue and impossible dramatic devices. With Dekker and Heywood, on the other hand, we reach a new form of drama, infinitely less crude than all the preceding efforts and containing not merely the narration of "horrid murthers," but genuine attempts at the expression of social problems and the portrayal of real characters.

The Honest Whore, in the first part of which Middleton had a share, may be taken as an introduction to this type, although already Heywood had brought out *A Woman Killed with Kindness.* It will be noted that this is not a tragedy in the ordinary sense of the term, nor is it a tragi-comedy of the Beaumont and Fletcher sort; it lies in a sphere outside of these, the sphere of the problem play and of the *drame.* Thought and feeling are cast into the conception of this drama, and in Orlando Friscobaldo, as

[1] Such is the name of the author on the title-page. This may be a mistake; the play has been given by Dr. W. W. Greg, to Day, Haughton, and Chettle.

Hazlitt saw, we have one of the most living characters in the whole of seventeenth-century dramatic productivity. The problems that arise out of marital infidelity are here presented with a truth and profundity to which but few writers of the time could attain, and the scene at the opening of Act III in Part II, beyond the wit and gaiety of Infelice, has a depth of thought in it hard to equal. Infelice has pretended herself unfaithful to her husband Hippolito, in order thereby to sting him more for his own incontinency.

Inf. I beg but this;
Set not my shame out to the worlds broad eye,
Yet let thy vengeance (like my fault) soare hye,
So it be in darkned clowdes.
Hip. Darkned! my hornes
Cannot be darkned, nor shall my reuenge.
A Harlot to my slaue? the act is base,
Common, but foule, so shall [not] thy disgrace.
Could not I feed your appetite? oh women
You were created Angels, pure and faire;
But since the first fell, tempting Deuils you are;
You should be mens blisse, but you proue their rods.
Were there no women, men might liue like gods.
You ha beene too much downe already, rise,
Get from my sight, and henceforth shun my bed,
Ile with no Strumpets breath be poysoned.
As for your Irish *Lubrican,*[1] that spirit
Whom by prepostrous charmes thy lust hath raised
In a wrong Circle, him Ile damne more blacke
Then any Tyrants soule.
Inf. Hipollito?
Hip. Tell me, didst thou baite Hawkes to draw him to thee, or did he bewitch thee?
Inf. The slaue did woo me.
Hip. Two wooes in that Skreech-owles language? Oh who would trust your corcke-heeld sex? I thinke to sate your lust, you would loue a Horse, a Beare, a croaking Toade, so your hot itching veines might haue their bound, then the wild Irish Dart was throwne. Come, how? the manner of this fight.
Inf. 'Twas thus, he gaue me his battery first, Oh I
Mistake, Beleeue me, all this in beaten gold:
Yet I held out, but at length this was charm'd.

[1] 'Lubrican' is a variant of 'leprechaun,' an English form of an Irish word meaning a sprite or goblin.

What? change your Diamond wench, the act is base,
Common, but foule, so shall not your disgrace:
Could not I feed your appetite? Oh Men,
You were created Angels, pure and faire,
But since the first fell, worse than Deuils you are.
You should our shields be, but you proue our rods,
Were there no Men, women might liue like gods.
Guilty my Lord?
Hip. Yes, guilty, my good Lady.

There is here something far beyond the callous and thoughtless treatment of intrigue and unfaithfulness visible in the average comedies of the time and in the tragi-comedies of the following decades.

In *A Woman Killed with Kindness* the stressing of the problem becomes even more marked. The story is essentially a simple one. Frankford and his wife are happily married, until the former's friend Wendoll, not sinful by nature but weak, seduces the latter. The husband, in his trust, suspects nothing, until his old servant breaks the truth to him. He pretends to leave for a journey, but returns in the dark of night to find his wife in his friend's embraces. Instead of murdering them both, as the convention of ordinary tragedy would have demanded, he pardons his still beloved Anne and sends her to live in seclusion at a lonely manor. There she pines, and, dying, sends for him. In his presence her repentant spirit passes away. As Heywood realized, there was little here of the ordinary dramatic fare; and as warning he sent the prologue out before the audience:

I come but like a Harbenger being sent,
To tell you what these preparations meane:
Looke for no glorious state, our muse is bent
Vpon a barrein subiect: a bare sceane.
We could afford this twig a Timber tree,
Whose strength might boldly on your fauours build,
Our Russet, Tissew: Drone, a Hony-Bee,
Our barrein plot, a large and spacious fielde.
Our course fare, banquets: our thin Water, Wine:
Our Brooke, a Sea: our Bats eyes, Eagles sight:
Our Poets dull and earthy muse, Diuine.

In spite of the 'barrenness' of the theme, however,

Heywood's play was instantly acclaimed, running to three editions by 1617. Nor is this surprising. The very story tells of the higher feeling of the author, and the treatment is worthy of the plot. The delicate touches by which the author depicts the wife's fall, the symbolic game of cards before the final discovery, the tremendous passion of the husband, all tell of a dramatic genius of no common sort. It is in the expression of this passion that Heywood rises to the heights of poetry. Nicholas the servant is about to wake the two guilty lovers; Frankford hinders him; then his thoughts pour forth in a torrent of agony:

> Oh God, oh God, that it were possible
> To vndo things done, to cal back yesterday;
> That time could turne vp his swift sandy glasse,
> To vntel the daies, and to redeeme these howres:
> Or that the sunne
> Could rising from the West, draw his coach backward
> Take from the account of time so many minutes
> Til he had al these seasons cald againe,
> Those minutes and those actions done in them,
> Euen from her first offence, that I might take her
> As spotless as an Angel in my armes,
> But oh: I talke of things impossible,
> And cast beyond the moone, God giue me patience,
> For I wil in to wake them.

I know of nothing more tremendous in the whole range of Elizabethan drama; there is here something of Shakespeare's greatness.

Not only the characterization of this play deserves attention, but the atmosphere given to the plot as a whole. There is nothing of fate in the defection of Mistress Frankford, but some supernatural element is constantly suggested. Frankford opens the day which is to embitter his whole life with a soliloquy on his happiness and security; Mistress Frankford herself falls into compliance with Wendoll as if some force were driving her on. She realizes fully the fine nature of her husband; she sees the heinousness of the sin she contemplates; and with an "Oh Master Wendoll Oh" she sinks into acquiescence. There is nothing here of mere licentious intrigue.

The English Traveller presents the same features as does this early play, but these features are confused and marred by a sub-plot of Plautan comic type. The main story of this play likewise introduces a problem. Geraldine, a fine young English gentleman, whose culture has been increased by foreign travel, returns home. There he falls in love with the wife of an elderly friend of his, but, disdaining to wrong this friend, he pledges with her eternal chastity. At this point the villain, in the shape of a treacherous and licentious young gallant, enters into the development of the story. He succeeds in seducing the wife, and hints to various characters that Geraldine is guilty. In the end his evil practices are laid bare, and the wife dies of shame and repentance. One thing is noticeable in both these plays. Most of the early seventeenth-century dramatists were obsessed by the consciousness of sin; they felt a kind of unholy horror in the contemplation of it, yet they were led deeper and deeper into the slough of despond. Considered from the purely æsthetic point of view, many of the most striking and most beautiful passages in the works of these dramatists are the passages which deal with the most obnoxious situations. Heywood stands apart. He is not interested in the psychology of sin as such; he is interested in the reflection of that sin in the minds of others. Thus Frankford is more carefully drawn than Mrs Frankford; Geraldine is a more complete portrait than is the erring wife. It is this which places Heywood so high among the playwrights of his time; here at least one man preserved his sanity, his feelings of truth and honesty and goodness, unimpaired in the midst of what was a general corruption of manners and taste. The revelry of the Stuart Court passed him by, and he found solace and strength in the inherent nobility of the middle classes of his time.

The *bourgeois* drama, in spite of these early efforts, was doomed to give way to the more spectacular forces of the romantic tragi-comedy and of the horror tragedy; heroic sentiments and the results of brilliant but diseased imaginations were to take the minds of men far from the contemplation of ordinary sorrows and ordinary joys.

Yet the effort had been made, and was to bear fruit in the future. The author of *Arden of Feversham,* Dekker, and Heywood were to become the ancestors of the authors of *The Orphan* and of *The London Merchant,* and through these later writers the tradition was to be handed on to Lessing at the close of the eighteenth century and to Ibsen at the close of the nineteenth. Ibsen, in his turn, became the master of many of the most talented dramatists of our own age.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHRONICLE HISTORY

ALREADY we have noted alongside of the development of what may be styled regular tragedy and comedy the appearance of the history play, first in a modified kind of morality form as in Bale's *Kynge Johan* and later in the various dramas, mostly anonymous, produced at the time when the University Wits were establishing the romantic drama in England. The University Wits themselves indulged in the form, Peele giving us his *Edward I,* Marlowe his *Edward II,* and Greene his more fantastic *James IV.* It was but natural that Shakespeare, following these University Wits, should make some attempts in this form. The chronicle history was popular in the nineties of the sixteenth century, partly because it allowed of bustle and action, partly because it could mingle together thoughts serious and merry, tragic and comic, and partly because there had come over England in those years a wave of patriotic sentiment. The Armada had just been scattered; Elizabeth had just made herself the unquestioned head of a unified nation and of an established Church. Men were thus eager to trace in dramatic form the development of England in the record of its kings, and to fight over again the many battles, glorious and inglorious, with their hereditary enemies across the Channel. Shakespeare, an actor himself and watching keenly the theatrical fashions of his time, seems, characteristically, to have determined to present as complete a set of historical dramas as lay in his power.

Tentatively enough he started with the three parts of *Henry the Sixt* (1592; printed 1623), in which he apparently worked over the existing productions of elder contemporaries. Opinion has differed widely as to his share in these dramas. The Folio editors believed them to be his, but more progressive critics of recent times have decided that but little

remains in them of the master's writing. It is hard to dogmatize over a matter such as this, but, recognizing that these are the earliest of Shakespeare's efforts in the dramatic world, we may perhaps believe that much of the distinctly inferior dialogue is possibly his, penned at a time before he found his own true method of expression.

The Tragedy of King Richard the third (? 1593; printed 1597) evidently came next, and here Shakespeare, while following an earlier tragedy on the same theme and altering that earlier work in the spirit of Marlowe, has secured something of an individual note. It is not that here Shakespeare has secured perfect characterization or perfect form, but Richard is a firmly drawn character. The passion that is in him, the gleaming eyes of the man staring hungrily at his goal, show an advance on anything which had gone before. We may say that the Lady Anne scene is impossible; we may compare unfavourably the scene wherein the messenger announces the approach of Richard's foes with the similar scene in *Macbeth;* we may condemn the introduction of the melodramatic ghosts, but at the same time we realize that in this play we have an ordered whole which retains its beauty in spite of the many obvious blemishes in the development of the plot.

In *The Tragedie of King Richard the second* (1595–6; printed 1597) Shakespeare has achieved more individuality of utterance, although many of the minor characters are lacking in personality, and the sharply contrasted Richard and Bolingbroke remind us of the similar contrast in *Edward II.* This tragedy is more lyrical than the other, not only in the general dialogue, but in the characterization of Richard, who is nothing if not a dreamer and a poet. All the King's soliloquies are couched in a rich, ecstatic language. He is 'conceited' as Romeo is, and even when he lies imprisoned in Pomfret Castle he indulges in his habitual lyricism.

> Musicke do I heare?
> Ha, ha? keepe time: How sowre sweet Musicke is,
> When Time is broke, and no Proportion kept?
> So is it in the Musicke of mens liues:
> And heere haue I the daintinesse of eare,

To heare time broke in a disorder'd string:
But for the Concord of my State and Time,
Had not an eare to heare my true Time broke.
I wasted Time, and now doth Time waste me:
For now hath Time made me his numbring clocke;
My Thoughts, are minutes; and with Sighes they iarre,
Their watches on vnto mine eyes, the outward Watch,
Whereto my finger, like a Dialls point,
Is pointing still, in cleansing them from teares.
Now sir, the sound that tels what houre it is,
Are clamorous groanes, that strike vpon my heart,
Which is the bell: so Sighes, and Teares, and Grones,
Shew Minutes, Houres, and Times: but my Time
Runs poasting on, in *Bullingbrooke's* proud ioy,
While I stand fooling heere, his iacke o' th' Clocke.
This Musicke mads me, let it sound no more,
For though it haue holpe madmen to their wits,
In me it seemes, it will make wise-men mad:
Yet blessing on his heart that giues it me;
For 'tis a signe of loue, and loue to *Richard,*
Is a strange Brooch, in this all-hating world.

Here Shakespeare is writing history in the terms of *Romeo and Juliet.*

It is highly probable that, a year before the appearance of *Richard II, The Life and Death of King John* (printed 1623) was produced. This drama, based on *The Troublesome Reign of King John,* is nearer in spirit to the first than to the second of the Richard plays. Shakespeare has kept close to his original, although his omissions as well as his additions betoken care and thought. The very opening shows us this, where Shakespeare, omitting about thirty lines of the original, has been able to plunge *in medias res.* Two things are particularly noticeable in this drama in general. The first is the fact that, in structure, it is least like a chronicle history. Several salient facts in John's career have been selected, so that the form is more co-ordinate and unified than it is in either *Richard III* or *Richard II.* The second point of interest is the patriotism of the piece. Nowhere has Shakespeare deviated so much from history in order to praise the English and condemn the French. As in *Richard II,* there is little humour, save that of a peculiarly sarcastic nature put into the mouth of

the Bastard Faulconbridge, but there appears here in Constance a woman character more finely drawn than any other of Shakespeare's historical women types.

So far Shakespeare's endeavours in the realm of historical drama had not shown anything of peerless excellence, but about 1596 or 1597 appeared the true masterpiece of *The History of Henrie the Fourth* (printed 1598), followed by *The Second part of Henrie the fourth* (1597–8; printed 1600). Instead of gloomy tragedy or lyrical passion there is transfused into this play a genuinely realistic and humorous tone. Out of the sketch of the character of a certain Sir John Oldcastle, Shakespeare developed the now immortal figure of Falstaff, one who, as we have seen, belongs to the realm of the romantic comedy. That Shakespeare did not feel quite at ease in the company of this witty old rascal is shown probably by the 'rejection of Falstaff' at the close of the second part of the play, and by the record of his death in *The Chronicle History of Henry the fift* (1599; printed 1600), the last of this series of history plays. Concerning *Henry V* opinions have been various. Regarded impartially, the drama does seem to mark a falling off from the others. Nowhere save in the suspect *Merry Wives of Windsor* has Shakespeare presented us with such palpable 'humours,' not only in Nym, Bardolph, and Pistol, but in Fluellen, Gower, Macmorris, and Jamy. It is observable how the older characters taken over from *Henry IV* have changed. Doll Tearsheet is dead, and the narration of Falstaff's end gives occasion for one of the most touching speeches in the play; Nym and Bardolph are hanged, and Pistol, waxing old, must turn to theft. The old company has passed away for ever. Nor is Henry here by any means the Hal of merry memory in *Henry IV*. The whole atmosphere has altered; and Mr J. M. Robertson has many points of evidence in his favour when he relieves Shakespeare from the burden of much of the language and plot-development.

Immediately after the production of *Henry V* Shakespeare turned to write his greater tragedies; he was not to return to the history play until he collaborated with

Fletcher in penning *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eight* (*c.* 1613; printed 1623), an infinitely slighter and less enthralling drama than any which had preceded it. The figure of Wolsey certainly rises to lofty heights, but there is a weakness in the drama as a whole. The age of the chronicle history had passed away.

Few are the attempts in this style in the seventeenth century. Samuel Rowley has one to his credit in *When you see me, You know me* (*c.* 1603; printed 1605), interesting because it deals with the subject-matter of the last-mentioned drama. Here also Wolsey's character is that best developed, but the clownage in many of the scenes ruins entirely the unity of effect. John Ford has another in *The Chronicle Historie of Perkin Warbeck* (printed 1634), a well-written drama with an excellently delineated title-*rôle*. Except for these, however, we may say that the chronicle history was dead by the end of the sixteenth century.

Several reasons, perhaps, may be brought forward to account for this sudden disappearance of the type. The first, and most obvious, is the fact that the chief themes had been worn out. So recent a reign as that of Elizabeth could not be dealt with, and before the time of King John there was probably hardly sufficient historical material for the dramatists to build their structures aright. But this could hardly be all. We must take into account, too, the weakening spirit of patriotism at the time. Men were less adventurous and England-loving than they had been at the close of the sixteenth century, and were accordingly less interested in the affairs of their country in the past. It is noticeable that Chapman, in turning to historical drama, took his themes not from English, but from French chronicles. The romantic spirit, also, was leading men away from realism and the depiction of fact. In this connexion the early Britain dramas are instructive. Possibly they owed some of their popularity to patriotic sentiment, but it was a patriotic sentiment far different from that which had inspired the hearts of Drake and of Raleigh. Artificiality and hazy, fanciful sentiment had taken the place of reality and forceful thought.

CHAPTER IX

THE MASQUE

NO account of English drama could be complete without a note, at least, devoted to the development of the masque, although the masque is in no wise connected with the popular stage, and in some ways is distinctly undramatic. At the same time there are many masques essentially dramatic in form, and masques of a sort were introduced into regular plays, as, for example, in *The Tempest.*

The masque arose out of courtly revelry. The disguisings of early days when the king and his nobles accompanied by the queen and her ladies strove to make the nights bright with rich and fanciful pageantry easily developed into the spoken masque. In origin the disguising and masquerading of earlier days is thoroughly English; but this native strain met in the beginning and middle of the sixteenth century with a Continental element taken *via* France from Italy, and so developed toward the close of the century the typically Elizabethan and Stuart masque. Herein fanciful poetry usually of a eulogistic kind met with rich costuming and the spirit of adventurous intrigue. Masquers came from their places, and, mingling with the spectators, danced with them. For a moment care was thrown to the winds, and under the flaring torchlights or milder glimmer of the candles knights and ladies laughed away the time or danced over the rush-strewn floors.

The masque proper, at least as we know it to-day, is rather a Stuart than an Elizabethan development. Sir Philip Sidney, certainly, has left us his *May Lady* (1578; printed in *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia,* 1598), but the full development of the type does not come till we reach the time of Ben Jonson in the early seventeenth century. After one or two "entertainments" Jonson



DESIGN BY INIGO JONES FOR "NEPTUNE'S TRIUMPH" 210

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penned his *Masque of Blacknesse* (1605; printed 1608), which was so successful for its poetry and for the artistic co-operation of the author and Inigo Jones, the artificer, that Jonson was called on again and again to provide similar pieces for the delectation of the Court. Other writers too were bidden to prepare these royal spectacles—Thomas Campion, Samuel Daniel, Francis Beaumont, George Chapman, Thomas Carew, Sir William D'Avenant, and James Shirley. Others were commissioned to write pieces for nobles of the realm; Milton himself penned *Comus* for the Bridgewater family.

It is impossible here to spare space for a lengthy discussion of these works, but one or two salient points may be noted in general. The first concerns the structure of the masque itself. Up to Jonson's time the masque was a fanciful entity, but in *The Masque of Queens* (1609) he introduced a feature which was already apparent in an undeveloped form in the sixteenth century—a dance of "anticks" forming what came to be known technically as the antimasque. This antimasque contributed something of a satyric note to the work, and the novelty inherent in the contrast between the gorgeous splendour of the masque proper and the contorted or 'antick' forms of the antimasque assured the latter full popularity.

The second point concerns a question of dramatic history. After the early masques of James I's reign and of the first years of that of Charles I the masque fashion, apparently for financial reasons, fell into disfavour. Possibly the later specimens of this kind would never have been produced had it not been for the appearance in 1632 of Prynne's famous diatribe against Court and stage entitled *Histriomastix*. As with one accord the Cavaliers, reacting to this Puritan attack, took to themselves an added bravado. Some of the most gorgeous masques of the whole seventeenth century appeared just after the publication of this work—Carew's notorious *Cœlum Britanicum* (1633; printed 1634), Shirley's *A Contention for Honour and Riches* (printed 1633) and his more famous *Triumph of Peace* (1633–4), and Sir William D'Avenant's *Salmacida*

Spolia (1639–40.) [1] It is observable that Milton's *Arcades* (printed 1645) and *Comus* (1634; printed 1637) fall within this period of Cavalier enthusiasm against the Puritan opposition to staging and riotous revelry.

The staging of these masques also requires our attention. In the endeavours of Inigo Jones, assisted by Jonson and the Court favour, we find the first definite approach toward modern systems of scenic display. The masques certainly were Court functions, wholly dissociated from the popular stages, but that cannot take away from the importance of Inigo Jones' innovations. With the desire for richness the elaboration of scenery and 'machines' proved inevitable. From Italy Jones no doubt brought back with him many ideas for the development of scenic art in England and put these into practice in the palace shows. At first working with a single set scene, he elaborated a kind of shifting setting, attained first by a triangular frame which could be turned to show separate and distinct pieces of scenery, later by the employment of flats and side-wings running in grooves. The importance of these innovations has already been commented upon. The influence of Jones' endeavours is to be seen in the production of *Aglaura* previously mentioned; his own pupil and assistant, John Webb, aided D'Avenant in the arrangements for *The Siege of Rhodes* in 1656; and D'Avenant was the first to establish regular scenery on the public stage of England, as he was one of the last to be associated as poet in the production of a Court masque. The age was moving forward, and the establishment of the 'picture-frame' stage would have been effected even although no Commonwealth *régime* had apparently broken the line of theatrical tradition.

. . . . . .

A backward glance at the history of drama from 1600 to 1642 shows a general movement toward the elaboration of spectacular elements, revealed in their own way in this

[1] Already D'Avenant had written and produced *The Temple of Love* (1634), *The Triumphs of the Prince d'Amour* (1635–6), and *Britannia Triumphans* (1637).

masque scenery. The strong idealistic drama of the early years was being slowly crushed out of existence both by crude realism and by artificial romance. On the one hand the followers of Jonson were bringing vulgarity and crudity into the theatre. On the other the followers of Beaumont and Fletcher were introducing weaker or more corrupt emotions, artificiality of plot and of character-drawing, thrillingly startling effects, and spectacular novelties. Against the general tendency of the times a few men are seen striving—Dekker in his fresh, naturalistic comedy, Heywood in his *bourgeois* drama, Massinger more feebly in his serious but vitiated rhetorical tragedies.

The contrast between the two extremes of ultra-realism and of ultra-artificiality prepares the way for the two main types of Restoration drama. Men have lost the true feeling of moral right, of high thinking, of sincerity; they appreciate wit far more than all of these; and accordingly we are not far from the period when Etheredge was to found the comedy of manners. With the loss of honourable and moral sentiments true nobility of character has gone, and elaborate disquisitions on courage and virtue take their place. Here we find the basis for the development of the heroic drama, where courage, virtue, honesty, honour, are all exaggerated to such a height that they cease to bear any resemblance to these qualities as exemplified in actual life.

At the same time, while we note this general decay and decadence in the age, we cannot fail to discern the true greatness in drama continued from Elizabethan times. Ford, Webster, and Shirley are all true poets; Fletcher is a genius in his own style of drama; Massinger's serious temper, D'Avenant's romantic aspirations, Middleton's gloomy thoughts, Tourneur's dark imagination, have all in them the breath of inspiration, and Jonson stands like a burly colossus over his age. The richness of the period is unquestioned, even when we recognize that it is a richness like to that of a flower, passing beyond its spring-tide, becoming florid and indelicate, eventually to wither away into aridity. If the metaphor be retained, however, there seems still further truth to be wrung from it. The seeds of

this flower which in maturity was Shakespeare, scattered not only in England, but all over the world, gave birth to a new plant as sturdy and almost as beautiful as the old. If we cast our gaze over Europe in the eighteenth century we can see that everywhere it was the Elizabethan drama which inspired the rising theatres of the Continent, and drove back the chilling theories of neo-classical France, until, in time, France itself gave way and in Victor Hugo produced a romantic and bizarre genius akin to Shakespeare himself. Nor is Shakespeare alone. Massinger has fired the enthusiasm of not only one Continental writer; Heywood, as we have seen, stands at the head of a vast and far-reaching dramatic tradition never more keenly alive than it is to-day; Ford has captured the fancy of one of the best known of modern playwrights, the mystic and symbolic Maurice Maeterlinck. This is the period, after all, which created our greatest national treasure, a treasure which has become the heritage of all mankind.

PART III

RESTORATION DRAMA

CHAPTER I

THE SOCIAL AND THEATRICAL ENVIRONMENT DRAMA DURING THE COMMONWEALTH

Drama under the Puritans

THE theatres were officially closed by Commonwealth ordinance in 1642; theoretically there was no further acting in England until 1660 saw the restoration of Charles II. Appearances, however, are often deceptive, and we cannot assume either that the firmly established love of theatrical shows was completely suppressed during these eighteen years of dramatic silence, or that there was during this period any marked break in the theatrical tradition. Recent research is tending to prove that the old theory which insisted that the Restoration drama had very little to do with the Elizabethan was false, because it was based on an insufficient sifting of the evidence.

There is no question but that the Puritan authorities were determined to put a stop to all sorts of amusement, innocent and otherwise; but there is equally no question but that the actors and spectators frequently evaded the vigilance of the soldiery and presented their shows in defiance of authority. Acting in the Commonwealth period was of two kinds: at the old theatres with performances by some of the players of Caroline days, and at theatres, booths, inns, halls, by bands of actors who put before the spectators 'drolls' or farces. It would appear that the latter were fairly common, and may not have come so much under the disapprobation of the Puritans as the former. These drolls were usually short one-act farces taken from well-known plays. Thus the more rudely

comic portions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* were extracted from the play as a whole, and the result performed under the title of *Bottom the Weaver*. Of these drolls two collections are extant, one entitled *The Wits,* published in 1662, and the other *The Stroler's Pacquet Open'd,* issued in 1742. This droll tradition is an important one, for it ran its course by the side of the regular theatre tradition right on to the close of the eighteenth century. Nor does an account of the acting of drolls exhaust the theatrical activities of the Commonwealth period. Regular plays too were frequently to be seen on the boards. Whenever the actors could gather an audience together in one of the several half-dismantled playhouses they would, no doubt in most unseemly haste, hurry through some Beaumont and Fletcher or Shakespeare drama. Sometimes these performances were interrupted by the rude entrance of the Puritan soldiers, and then the affair was put into the primitive newspapers of the time; more often than not the players must have got off unscathed, and all record of the performance must irretrievably have been lost. There are many extant accounts of acting during these years, and those accounts, we must presume, are but roughly indicative of a fairly constant series of irregular performances both in London and in the provinces. The continuity of tradition was thus in two distinct ways being preserved.

Nor were these the only means by which the earlier Caroline theatre was connected with the later. Some of the actors at least formed themselves into a company and set off for Germany under the leadership of one George Jolly, who was later to associate himself with William Beeston, formerly master or governor of the King's company of child players, at Salisbury Court. His *répertoire* must have been composed of well-known Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline plays, and the acting traditions of earlier days must have been carried on by his activities over the eighteen years of theatre suppression. William Beeston himself forms another link. This man, whom Dryden called the Chronicle of the Stage, was the son of Christopher



"Red Bull" Stage 216

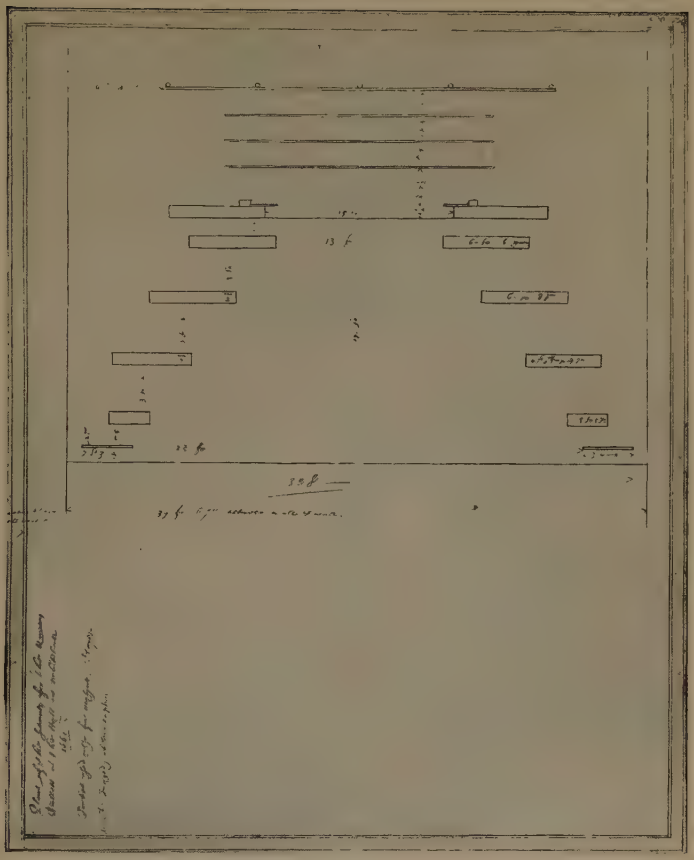
Beeston, who had known Shakespeare and Spenser in the opening years of the seventeenth century. It is likely that William Beeston, owner in 1660 of the Salisbury Court playhouse and associated with D'Avenant in the latter's theatrical undertakings, played the part of a *maestro* to the younger players. These acting links are completed in Sir William D'Avenant, one who was intimately associated with the theatre in the days of Charles I and who became leader of a patent company under Charles II. His own operatic endeavours in *The Siege of Rhodes* and other similar pieces performed during the last years of the Commonwealth period provide a pleasant little oasis of licensed acting in the midst of an otherwise arid desert.

Many of those who were not of the severest Puritanical convictions looked back to the theatrical glories of days gone by, and kept alive in their hearts the love of acting. The various links we have already glanced at serve to show the binding together of the theatre tradition as far as actual performances and methods of acting are concerned; but the tradition of the written play was also preserved in several distinct ways. Many of the players at least found their regular sources of income taken away from them, and they were forced to dispose of that which in earlier days they had jealously guarded. It is a peculiar fact that in the early seventeenth century the players seem to have believed that a drama unprinted was more likely to be popular in the theatre than a drama published. Accordingly they held in their tiring-rooms stacks of manuscripts which they refused to sell to the 'stationers.' Only in times of distress—as, for instance, during the periods when the playhouses were shut because of the plague—did they reluctantly dispose of their treasures. There are, of course, obvious exceptions. Heminge and Condell issued in 1623 many then unpublished works of Shakespeare, apparently as a kind of last service to their deceased friend; Jonson evidently looked upon his plays as his own property and had his *Works* printed in 1616; but normally the various dramas were regarded as the possessions of those companies by whom they had first been produced. During the

Commonwealth period many of these plays were released by the actors. It is probably to the Commonwealth restrictions that we owe many of the best works of Beaumont and Fletcher, issued by the actors in 1647, and the eighteen years of suppression are plentifully studded with the publication of various independent plays. That this publication would have been impossible without a corresponding reading public is a necessary assumption; there were many in England who, remembering pleasant days spent in the theatres, turned from the stage to the study and perused there their favourite tragedies and comedies of Shakespeare, of Beaumont and Fletcher, or of Shirley.

(ii) The Restoration Theatre

In 1660 Charles II returned to his throne amid the rejoicings of a nation wearied of the excessive restrictions of the Commonwealth era, and his band of devoted Cavaliers, who had shared his exile with him, joined with the many people in England eager for a return of earlier Caroline traditions. No sooner was Charles on his throne than bodies of actors were formed into companies. George Jolly hurried back from Germany; William Beeston hastily opened up the Salisbury Court theatre; Killigrew gathered together the remnants of the old King's men; D'Avenant collected a body of young actors, untrained, but eager for histrionic glory. The King, however, was anxious to keep the affairs of the theatre in his own hands, and within a few months of his accession he had issued orders and patents by which the number of companies was limited to two, one under Killigrew, who may be regarded as the last royal jester, and another under D'Avenant. These two companies settled down to a comfortable monopoly, the first at the various Theatres Royal, the second at the Duke's houses in Lincoln's Inn Fields and in Dorset Garden. In 1682 both were amalgamated into one, and remained so until the year 1695 saw the secession of a number of the best actors. The first point we note, then, is this, that for thirteen years one theatre supplied all the needs of London, and that for



PLAN OF WHITEHALL STAGE BY JOHN WEBB 218

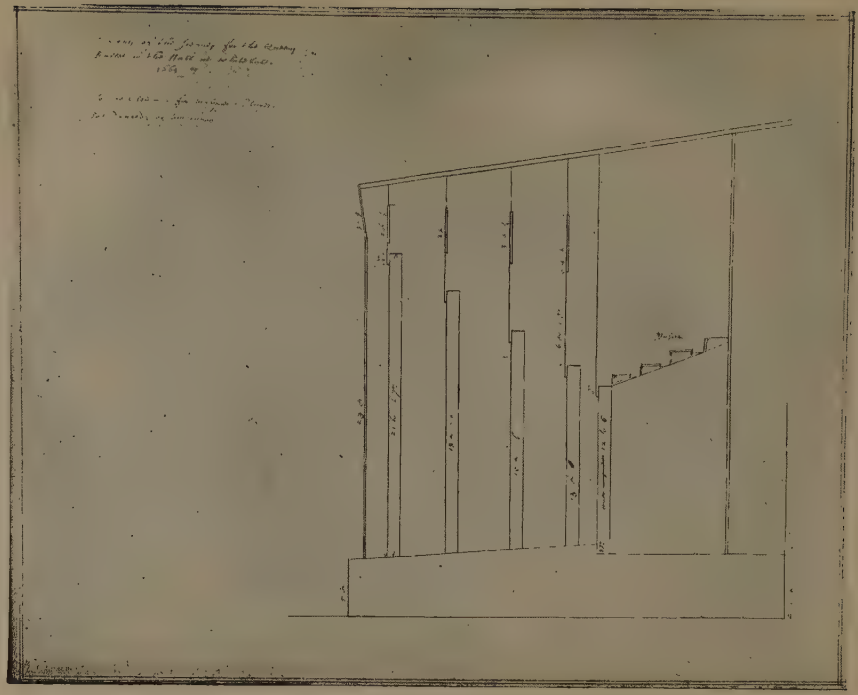
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the other twenty-seven years to the end of the century only two theatres were running. When we remember that a smaller London of thirty or forty years previously had been able to support as many as six theatres running concurrently it becomes obvious that some great change had come over the playgoing public. That change is really the culmination of the gradual movement we have seen growing in the early years of the century. The theatre has degenerated completely into a thing of the Court. The middle classes for the most part keep away. A few of the unaristocratic people of the time, such as Pepys, may have attended the theatre during these years, but such people were those who sought for Court preferment or who aped in one way or another the manners and tastes of the Cavaliers. All we know of the theatre in these times proves conclusively that the typical audience was composed of the courtiers, their ladies, the beaux, and the 'wits,' with a sprinkling of the riff-raff of the town. The playhouse had become the rather riotous haunt of the upper classes, and, as a consequence, the plays written for that playhouse were distinctly calculated by the authors to appeal to a courtly and Cavalier audience. It is this that explains both the rise of the heroic tragedy and the elaboration of the comedy of manners. The one appealed to artificial aristocratic sentiments on the subject of honour; the other reflected the morally vicious but intellectually brilliant atmospheres of the *salons* and the chocolate-houses.

A return will be made later to this question of the influence of the audience upon Restoration drama; at present a few words must be said concerning the actual structure of the playhouses and on the influence exercised by that structure upon the plays of the time. In three particular ways the Restoration theatre differed from the Elizabethan. Save for the first few years after 1660, when some of the older playhouses were utilized by the actors, there was no appearance at this time of the open-air 'public' theatre of earlier days. The new theatres were, with one early exception, roofed in, and consequently lit by artificial light. Moreover, the first new premises occupied by the

players were not of the square inn-yard type, but were converted tennis-courts, oblong in shape. It is obvious that in houses of this sort the Elizabethan platform stage would have been out of the question; on the other hand, tradition pointed to a stage surrounded by the audience. A compromise was effected whereby a proscenium arch, unknown in the early seventeenth century save in the masques at Court, cut off part of the theatre, and an 'apron' in the form of a semicircle jutted out into the midst of the pit. There is here the ideal union of two mutually opposing systems of staging. Intimacy with the audience could still be secured by the players when they moved to the forward portion of the stage, and yet there remained the possibility of scenic display in the back portion of the house. We shall expect to find, therefore, and do find, that the plays written for this theatre show many anomalies. They are transition plays, at one and the same time looking back to the earlier platform stage with its free conventions, and looking forward to the development of a new theatre. For the first few years it is natural that the dramatists should not have learned how to write for the altered stage; their plays are cast in the Elizabethan form. Gradually, however, the exigencies of the changed conditions made themselves felt; playwrights realized the needs of the actors, and their plays, because of the influence of the scenery, became more co-ordinate and less scattered in subject-matter than the plays written in Shakespeare's time. Only in the very spectacular productions of the period do we discover shifting of locality such as appears, for example, in *Antony and Cleopatra* or in *King Lear.*

The presence of this scenery, added to the fact that lighting of a primitive sort accompanied all plays, led to the loss of one important Elizabethan convention. We have already seen how Shakespeare was forced to explain to his audience where his actors were and at what time the action was supposed to take place. This was rendered necessary because of the lack of scenic arrangements and of lighting. In the Restoration theatre (which may be



CROSS-SECTION OF WHITEHALL STAGE BY JOHN WEBB 220

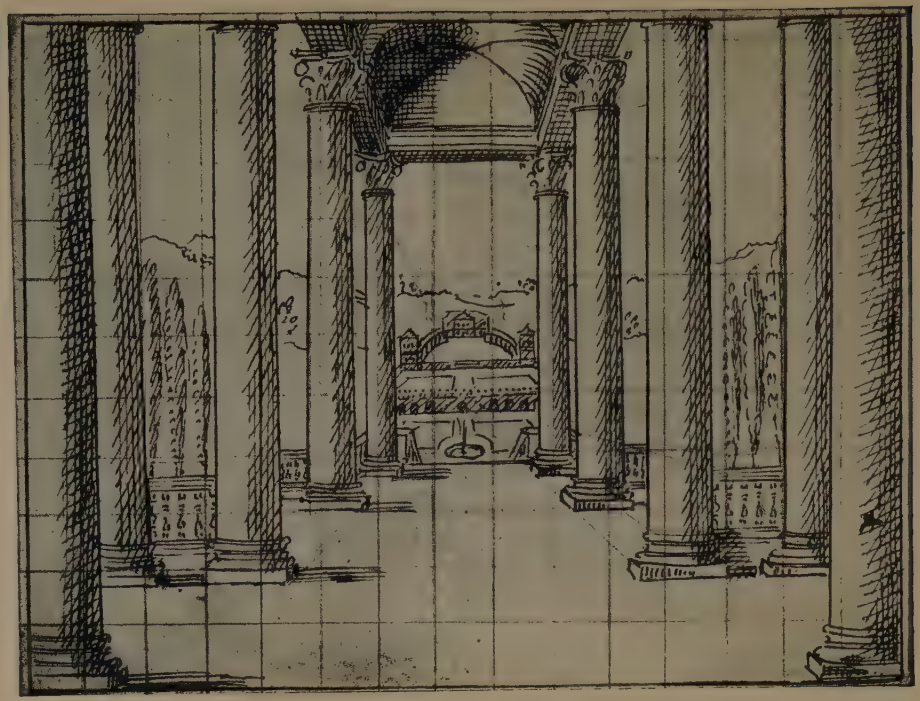
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regarded fundamentally as the modern theatre) such notices to the audience would have been superfluous, and consequently as we study the drama of this period we can see them slowly disappearing, year by year. More and more was left to the scene designer and to the machinist; more, that is to say, was left to the eye and less to the ear. While this made for greater concentration in the plays themselves and prevented minor dramatists from wandering into would-be poetical disquisitions on Nature's loveliness, it took away to a certain extent from the beauty of the plays. Many of the most gorgeous passages of pure poetry in the Elizabethan drama had been essentially undramatic save for the fact that they were rendered necessary by the type of playhouse; and the loss of opportunities for the natural introduction of such passages tended to kill the purely poetic drama.

The third point which is to be noted concerning the Restoration theatre is the introduction of actresses. In the former years all the players were men or boys; French *comédiennes* brought over in the reign of Charles I were apparently hissed out of London. The pleasure-loving Charles II, however, had seen many performances by women during his exile abroad, and he evidently decided that the introduction of actresses here would be a good thing. Cynically enough he pretended he was bringing about the innovation in the interests of morality. Probably no one believed him, but on the other hand no one objected, and a woman first appeared on the English stage to speak the prologue to *Othello* and play the part of Desdemona. Just at first the number of women capable of fulfilling their tasks must have been small, and boys continued occasionally to take feminine *rôles,* but by 1670 the establishment of the actress was complete. Not only was a Betterton and a Mohun praised, but a Nell Gwyn, a Moll Davis, a Mrs Barry, a Mrs Bracegirdle, and a Mrs Oldfield. It is unnecessary here to point out the many changes, good and bad, which these women brought into the theatre. It is unnecessary, too, to point to the increased immorality which they aided in settling on the stage. But one influence

may be noted here. For the most part, the early seventeenth-century writers were diffident about bringing women into their plays. There is a Rosalind and a Celia in *As You Like It,* but they are vastly outnumbered by their men companions. There are only two women in *Hamlet,* three in *Othello,* two in *Macbeth,* three in *King Lear.* With the advent of actresses, on the other hand, it became more and more necessary to provide suitable parts for the Nell Gwyns and the Mrs Bracegirdles. When D'Avenant (if he indeed be guilty) came to alter *Macbeth* he saw the necessity of enlarging the parts of both Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff; and when the same author in collaboration with Dryden sought to improve *The Tempest* the two authors provided Miranda with a sister and Ariel with a spirit mate. This tendency, noticeable in the adaptations of Shakespeare, is visible everywhere in the more original tragedies and comedies of the time. With the Restoration the position of women in the dramatic world was thoroughly established.

This consideration of the influence of theatrical conditions upon the drama of the late seventeenth century might be infinitely extended, but the features noted above appear to be those which are of main importance, necessary to be borne in mind whenever the works of this period are especially considered. As with the Elizabethan dramatic literature, it is possible to estimate aright the plays produced in the reign of Charles II only when these plays are related intimately with the theatre wherein they were first performed. The drama of this later period, based as it was on the drama of the past, yet developed certain new tendencies, tendencies which are dependent largely upon the audience and upon the theatre.



DESIGN BY JOHN WEBB FOR ORRERY'S "MUSTAPHA" 222

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CHAPTER II

THE HEROIC TRAGEDY AND THE RETURN TO SHAKESPEARE

Love and Honour Drama

THE period of the Restoration is remarkable for the development of several distinct species of drama which were destined to become the typical forms of theatrical activity or to give rise to equally typical cognate forms in the following century. These types of drama, of which the heroic tragedy, the comedy of manners, the opera, and the farce are the chief, all display a union of diverse forces. Each, regarded from one point of view, is the lineal descendant of some species of pre-Restoration drama, yet each is coloured and modified by the influence of contemporary Continental theatrical literature. The heroic tragedy is thus merely a further elaboration of those romantic plays which were first made popular by Beaumont and Fletcher. The Love and Honour which move throughout each specimen of this kind is no new thing. D'Avenant knew of the contest arising from the close opposition of these two sentiments, and the exaggerated, flamboyant language which is now associated most nearly with the tragic efforts of Dryden and Settle was anticipated by more than one dramatist of the early seventeenth century. On the other hand, we have the testimony of Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, who was the first to attempt the introduction of the new style into England, that the employment of rime in place of blank verse in these heroic plays was due to the influence of France, exerted through the enthusiasm of the King. Nor was it only in outer form that the Restoration dramatists modified their styles to accord with the prevailing tastes in Paris. The heroic drama, with its grandiloquent sentiments and its air of exaggeration, is to be regarded in one way as the representative in the

theatre of the mood and atmosphere of the heroic poem, a form of literature which, popularized by men such as Chamberlayne and D'Avenant, had come from France in the middle of the century. The comedy of manners, likewise, is an admixture of similar ingredients. Its source lies in the endeavours of Jonson in the comedy of humours and in those of Fletcher in the comedy of intrigue. Everywhere we can trace in its form the older strains altered a trifle to suit the tastes of a later age. The witty, debonair, callous, philandering air of Congreve's muse is intimately akin to the sterner and more satiric muse of Jonson. Yet much of what we know now as the comedy of manners would have remained unwritten, or would have been written in a different style, had the English theatre not possessed Molière for a guide and a model. It is not, as some modern critics have sought to make out, that the English comedy of the late seventeenth century was nothing more than a weakened replica of the contemporary comedy of France, but we must never neglect the influence exerted, directly and indirectly, upon Etherege and Wycherley and Congreve by the master of French comedy. The same analysis of forces holds good, also, for farce and opera. Farcical elements enough are apparent in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century comedies, and the later farce of the Restoration and Georgian eras owes a great deal of its vitality to older examples. The first afterpiece, however, and the first true English farce—Otway's *The Cheats of Scapin* (1676; printed 1677)—was but an adaptation from the French, and many of the other similar pieces produced in the last decades of the seventeenth century and in the years that followed were either alterations of French farcical works or farcical renderings of true comedies originally written by Molière and his companions. In the same way the Restoration opera, made glorious by the music of Purcell, was a purely native development, even although it might not have come into being had it not been for the operatic efforts of Renascence Italy and the cognate efforts of contemporary France. It cannot be too often asserted that, despite the immense change which had come over the



SCENE IN SETTLE'S "THE EMPRESS OF MOROCCO" 224

English theatre with the advent of Charles II, the substratum of all the dramatic activities during the latter half of the seventeenth century was, in the main, English. The great wave of enthusiasm for the theatre, which had risen to surge with Shakespeare, was still eddying along the shore, slightly disturbed but not clearly altered in its course by neighbouring cross-currents.

In the realm of tragedy the heroic element already glanced at was unquestionably the most potent in this period, but the heroic play did not by any means stand alone. While Charles patronized the love and honour drama, and, in patronizing it, gave the tone to the whole of courtly taste, and while heroic sentiment was in accordance with the rapidly crystallizing classicism of the age, it must ever be remembered that Shakespeare still held his honoured place on the stage and that practically every writer and critic of the time, with the notorious exception of Rymer, realized and commented upon Shakespeare's genius. The wilder excesses of the heroic style as well as the later dullness of the pseudo-classic formality were alike tempered by reminiscences of *Hamlet* and *Othello* and *Lear*, and from the appearance of Dryden's *All for Love* (1677; printed 1678), written confessedly in imitation of Shakespeare's style, may be dated a period when writer after writer attempted, however unsuccessfully, to pen dramas which might recall something of the earlier Elizabethan temper. For the first twenty years of the Restoration period, on the other hand, the heroic mood predominated over all others, in spite of the occasional appearance of tragedies which might, save for one or two characters or scenes, have been penned before 1642. This heroic mood has frequently been analysed. Its crudities, its violent rants and inflammatory speeches, its impossible psychology, its exalted idealism fossilized in the twin forces of love and honour, have all been noted, from contemporary times to the present. Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* (1671; printed 1672), burlesque as it is, hardly exaggerates the follies inherent in perfectly serious dramas of the time. Even the delightful soliloquy of Prince Prettiman over his

boots, which closes with his going out, one leg booted and the other bootless, can be paralleled by equally ridiculous scenes in plays written in the fond expectation that they would arouse those emotions of awe and pity which Aristotle finds the chief ends of all tragic endeavour. Such may be found not only in minor works as Pordage's *Herod and Mariamne* (1673) or Settle's *The Empress of Morocco* (1673), but in the better efforts of John Dryden himself.

Undoubtedly Dryden is the greatest, and perhaps the first, who took up this style of writing. The uncertainty concerning his claims to priority is due to the fact that it is not ascertainable now when the first production of the earliest effort of Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, took place. Two things, however, are clear. Dryden was anticipated in the actual writing of heroic plays not only by Orrery, who was engaged on a drama of this type as early as 1660, but by an otherwise unknown George Cartwright, who has left us a single tragedy, *The Heroick Lover* (1661), framed on the model made popular several years later. It is possible, however, that none of these earlier plays was acted until several years had elapsed, although a fair claim has been made for an early production of Orrery's *The Black Prince,* and Dryden clearly stands forward as the popularizer, if not the prime mover, of this type of drama. It was he who gave it impetus; it was he who, by his recantation, aided in drawing men's minds once more away from rime and heroics to blank verse and Shakespeare. Starting with *The Indian Queen* (1664; printed 1665), a drama written in collaboration with Sir Robert Howard, he led the van of the love and honour playwrights until the appearance of *All for Love, or The World well Lost* (1677; printed 1678) showed that he was growing tired of his long-loved mistress, rime. Between 1664 and 1677 he gave at least five of these dramas to the theatre—*The Indian Emperour, or, The Conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards* (1665; printed 1667), *Tyrannick Love, or the Royal Martyr* (1669; printed 1670), *The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards: In Two Parts* (1670; printed 1672), and *Aureng-Zebe* (1675; printed 1676)—besides the rimed

'opera' wrought out of Milton's *Paradise Lost* entitled *The State of Innocence, and Fall of Man* (printed 1677). All of the five heroic plays are built upon a set plan. There is in each a hero of superhuman prowess and with superhuman ideals; there is a heroine of unsurpassed constancy and beauty; there is an inner conflict in the minds of several of the characters between love and honour; there is a stirring story of fighting and martial enthusiasm, filled with intense dramatic interest. In general scope this heroic tragedy of Dryden's is surprisingly like the general scope of the Shakespearian drama, if we make allowances for the frequent happy ending which the Restoration author, probably influenced by the structure of epic and heroic poetry, saw fit to give to his plays. In both we find an exciting plot paralleled by an inner struggle; in both there are given to the hero superhuman proportions, the dramas being thus raised to a level above that of ordinary life. If the heroic tragedy, however, is in one way a development of earlier forms of tragic endeavour it is a development carried to excess. Dryden's plays bear the same relation to those of Shakespeare as a gramophone record bears to the voice of a celebrated singer. The tones are exaggerated and made harsh; there is the continual drone of unrefined harmonies; a lack of delicacy and of subtlety pervades the whole. Unquestionably Dryden realized the sphere of true tragedy; he had some conception of the genuine ἰδέα of this type of drama; but his age would not permit him to work that ἰδέα out in its correct forms. The consequence is that we can do little else now but smile good-humouredly at the more apparent follies of the type. The psychology, the language, the atmosphere, of this heroic drama are all foreign to us.

There is, moreover, one outstanding want in all Dryden's plays. That want is the lack of passion, or the lack of adequate treatment of passionate scenes. The reaction from the overstrained emotions of Ford's degenerate tragedies took the form of a complete overthrow of the world of passion. Just as the poets, in an endeavour to secure some saner utterance than was provided by the

lesser metaphysical writers, turned to the heroic couplet and the realm of the intellect, so the dramatists endeavoured to escape the wilder sentiments of a Ford by adopting as their sphere common sense and reason. Tragedy, however, can rarely, if ever, be thus limited to an intellectual plane; passion is its very life-force and innermost being; nor was Dryden, reared on the poetry of the metaphysicals and of the pre-Restoration dramatists, entirely lacking in emotion. It is the emotion in him which makes him the greatest lyric-writer of his time; it is an undercurrent of emotion which makes *Mac Flecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel* such perfect satires. For tragedy, on the other hand, such undercurrents of passion are not sufficient; here a full abandon must be made to the sternest and most soul-embracing of emotions; and that the common sense and reasonableness of the age would not permit. Dryden, therefore, is fettered. He cannot throw himself wholeheartedly into the passions he would depict for us, with the consequence that his emotional scenes are stilted and unnatural even beyond the jingling tones of the heroic rime. One example of this may be sufficient, an example which helps to display the immense chasm which divides the Elizabethan from the Restoration theatre. The supernatural had been treated by Shakespeare with a delicacy and a sureness of touch unknown before save in the dramas of classical Greece, and Shakespeare by his example had influenced many of his successors. Dryden too, in *The Conquest of Granada,* attempts a scene of like nature, but a comparison between the following lines and those which accompany the apparition of Hamlet's father will at once display how lamentably Dryden failed in calling forth the emotions of fear and wonder and awe.

Almanzor. A hollow Wind comes whistling through that Door;
And a cold Shiv'ring seizes me all o'er:
My Teeth, too, chatter with a sudden Fright:
These are the Raptures of too fierce Delight!
The Combat of the Tyrants, Hope and Fear;
Which Hearts, for want of Field-room, cannot bear.
I grow impatient; this, or that's the Room:
I'll meet her; now, methinks, I hear her come.

[*He goes to the Door; the Ghost of his Mother meets him. He starts back: The Ghost stands in the Door.*

Almanzor. Well may'st thou make thy Boast, whate'er thou art,
Thou art the first e'er made *Almanzor start.*
My Legs—
Shall bear me to thee in their own Despight:
I'll rush into the Covert of thy Night,
And pull thee backward by the Shrowd, to Light.
Or else I'll squeeze thee, like a Bladder, there;
And make thee groan thy self away to Air.

[*The Ghost retires.*

So, art thou gone! Thou canst no Conquest boast:
I thought what was the Courage of a Ghost.—
—The grudging of my Ague yet remains:
My Blood, like Isicles, hangs in my Veins,
And does not drop: Be Master of that Door,
We two will not disturb each other more.
I err'd a little, but Extreams may join;
That Door was Hell's, but this is Heav'n's and mine!

[*Goes to the other Door, and is met again by the Ghost.*

Again! by Heav'n I do conjure thee, speak.
What art thou, Spirit? and what dost thou seek?

[*The Ghost comes on softly after the Conjuration; and Almanzor retires to the middle of the Stage.*

Ghost. I am the Ghost of her who gave thee Birth;
The airy Shadow of her mould'ring Earth.
Love of thy Father me through Seas did guide;
On Seas I bore thee, and on Seas I dy'd.
I dy'd; and for my winding Sheet a Wave
I had; and all the Ocean for my Grave.
But, when my Soul to Bliss did upward move,
I wander'd round the Chrystal Walls above;
But found th' Eternal Fence so steeply high,
That, when I mounted to the middle Sky,
I flagg'd, and flutter'd down; and could not fly.
Then, from the Battlements of th' Heav'nly Tow'r,
A Watchman Angel bid me wait this Hour;
And told me I had yet a Task assign'd,
To warn that little Pledge I left behind;
And to divert him, ere it were too late,
From Crimes unknown, and Errors of his Fate.

Almanzor. Speak, Holy Shade; thou Parent-form, speak on: [*Bowing.*
Instruct thy Mortal Elemented Son;
(For here I wander, to my self unknown.)

But O, thou better Part of Heav'nly Air,
Teach me, kind Spirit, (since I'm still thy Care)
My Parents Names:
If I have yet a Father, let me know,
To whole old Age my humble Youth must bow;
And pay its Duty, if he Mortal be;
Or Adoration if a Mind, like thee.

The selection of such a passage as this for quotation must not, of course, be taken as implying that there is nothing of worth in the heroic drama. Speech after speech might be given to prove that Dryden was not only a master of language, but a poet and a true playwright. All that may be said is that the limitations of his age, themselves the consequences of romantic excess, prevented him from expressing to the full those ideas and those emotions which, had he been born forty years earlier, might have entitled him to rank among the greatest of the post-Shakespearians.

Alongside of Dryden roared and ranted a number of other heroic dramatists, most of whom are of little account. Elkanah Settle, with his wretched *Cambyses, King of Persia* (1671) and his not much finer *The Empress of Morocco* (1673), hardly deserves a better treatment than Dryden himself meted out to him. His plays evidently won a certain success in their own time, for the latter drama has the distinction of being the first fully illustrated play printed in England, but they possess nothing of Dryden's power of thought or of diction. John Crowne's work is almost equally negligible. *The Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian* (1677) is his best work in this style, but even it seems dull and uninteresting when compared with *The Conquest of Granada.* Of all the rout of heroic rimesters barely three stand forward as possessing unquestioned value. Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, already mentioned as a predecessor of Dryden in his style, is in some ways the least of these. A certain strength he has, and a decided power of expressing his thoughts in a capable but not over-musical heroic verse. His claim to remembrance rests, however, not so much on these qualities as on some peculiar features of the themes and of the treatment of those themes. It is noticeable, in the first place,

that Orrery's plays are modelled on a plan clearly distinct from that followed by his companion, Dryden. Dryden belongs to the regular line of native dramatic development. His plays are successors, if far-off successors, of the Shakespearian tragedy. Orrery is more deeply influenced by the rimed tragedy of France. His atmosphere has a decided chill, an attempt at classical restraint, which marks him out as the follower of Corneille and Racine rather than of the Elizabethans. The peculiar fact is, however, that, deeply influenced as he was by French example, he went back in some of his plays to an earlier English dramatic tradition, lost in the post-Shakespearian period. If in *The Tragedy of Mustapha, Son of Solyman the Magnificent* (1665; printed 1668) and in *Tryphon* (1668; printed 1669) he adopted those Eastern themes so popular with the heroic writers, in *The History of Henry the Fifth* (1664; printed 1668) and in *The Black Prince* (1667; printed 1669) he took up the chronicle-history tradition abandoned by almost all dramatists in the Jacobean and Caroline periods. It is assuredly true that his treatment of these native historical themes is almost totally unhistorical, and that it owes nothing to sixteenth-century example, yet the very fact that Orrery thought of English history at a time when men's minds were filled with grotesque visions of Peru and Persia and Egypt shows that he had a mind of his own, and his action must have had some influence upon later dramatists who turned once more for inspiration to the historical events of their native land. It must, of course, be confessed that Orrery had but small importance in his own time. Charles may have approved of his dramas, but his lack of stirring action, his chastened language, his efforts at restraint, were ill suited to compare favourably with the more exciting tragedies of Dryden. Orrery's influence came later, when pseudo-classicism brought calmness to the English theatre and when together with that pseudo-classic placidity a return was made to historical subject-matter.

Of different importance is Nathaniel Lee, the Bedlamite. This man, who first appeared on the dramatic horizon in

the full flush of heroicism with his *Tragedy of Nero, Emperour of Rome* (1674; printed 1675) and who continued to provide the theatre with rimed and blank-verse pieces until 1689, was one of those unhappy creatures who, born with an undue share of enthusiasm and passion into a world of intellect and reason, found relief only in madness. He is akin to Cowper and Smart and Blake, light flashing from his brain in lurid intervals, gleaming all the more brightly because of the surrounding gloom. The follies of Lee's rhapsodies for long obscured his real powers, but we now, in an age when dispassionate judgment is possible, can see beneath the absurdities of *Sophonisba: or, Hannibal's Overthrow* (1675; printed 1676), *of Gloriana, or the Court of Augustus Cæsar* (1676), and of *Theodosius; or, The Force of Love* (1680) elements which call for our whole-hearted praise. Lee possessed something of the mighty voice of the Elizabethans. His passion is infecting, rising as it does to the rich sweeping of tumultuous verse. He has little form in his dramas; every one of them lacks the finished care of a master, but if we may be permitted to judge of plays by individual scenes—always a dangerous course—we must accord him a high place among the dramatists who came between the age of Charles II and the age of Victoria.

The only other heroic writer who calls for individual mention here is Thomas Otway, who, before he penned his two brilliant masterpieces, gave a rimed *Alcibiades* (1675) and *Don Carlos, Prince of Spain* (1676) to the theatre. Both are marked by surer touches than may be found anywhere in the period save in the plays of Dryden. *Alcibiades* has many foolish scenes, but even in it there is a strength of utterance hard to overlook. In *Don Carlos* we reach one of the most perfect of these heroic dramas. The theme has more reality than is usual in the type, and the passions are not exaggerated out of all likeness to human emotions. The conflict in the breast of the son is well developed, and Otway shows himself here, at the very opening of his career, and working in a peculiarly difficult and circumscribed dramatic sphere, as the master which

he later proved himself conclusively to be in *The Orphan: or, The Unhappy Marriage* (1680) and in *Venice Preserv'd; or, A Plot Discover'd* (1682).

(ii) Blank-verse Tragedy

The mention of these two dramas brings us to an account of a dramatic development certainly influenced by, but distinct from, that of the heroic tragedy. This later dramatic development unquestionably was due to a new appreciation of Shakespeare. In 1677 Dryden wrote his *All for Love* in imitation of Shakespeare's style, and Otway produced, between his heroic plays and his two masterpieces, an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* as *The History and Fall of Caius Marius* (1679; printed 1680). It seems almost certain that a renewed acquaintanceship with Shakespeare's tragedies was thus partly responsible for the almost complete disappearance of the rimed drama after 1678 or 1679. Pseudo-classicism, rapidly growing in power, aided in curbing the excesses of the heroic playwrights, but to Shakespeare we must look first for the cause of the change. *The Orphan* is not precisely a Shakespearian drama, but it has something of that higher and nobler conception of tragedy which is associated with the early seventeenth century. The plot is well known; how two brothers love one girl, how one of the brothers marries her secretly, and the other, thinking it all but a licentious assignation, anticipates his brother in the darkened room and brings tragedy to all three. The story is a poignant one, full of possibilities of which Otway has taken full advantage. There is here that mingling of human error with fatal purpose which marks out the greatest tragedy of all time. The two brothers and the unhappy Monimia seem, as it were, wrapped in the folds of some mysterious destiny; their thoughts and actions are warped from their original intent; and the tragedy consequently is more than a mere tale of human frailty. At the same time, it is the licentious passion of the one brother, and the innocent duplicity of the lovers, which immediately bring about the

catastrophe. Only in one respect does Otway reduce this play to lower levels. His atmosphere, only too frequently, is that of pathos rather than tragic awe. The exciting of tears is his object rather than the conjuring forth of those deeper and richer emotions which leave us dry-eyed and aghast. In Otway's hands this element of pathos is not over-deeply stressed, but his example was destined to bring a sad array of lamentable and lachrymose dramas to the English stage. *Venice Preserv'd* has less of this element of pity. The theme is one of sterner emotions—the hard-hearted yet generous Pierre, the vacillating Jaffier, and the troubled Belvidera raising the drama above mere pathetic levels. Here perhaps the sense of fate is not so fully evident, although it is apparent in many scenes, but the psychological delineation of the characters is still more subtle and finely finished. The essential errors of these main figures are, too well developed, and the tragedy seems to move forward logically toward its self-appointed end. Its only blemishes lie in the not wholly convincing madness of Belvidera in the final scene, and in the comic episodes, which, in spite of the defence of some modern critics, seem to destroy the general atmosphere of the drama.

Of Otway's power there is no other dramatist of this age except Dryden, and even Dryden never succeeded in producing such a master-work as *Venice Preserv'd*. *All for Love* is his finest achievement, and this drama has less of the true tragic spirit than Otway's. The theme, as is well known, is that of Antony and Cleopatra, although there are few verbal reminiscences of Shakespeare's play. Dryden's aim has here been to fuse the more formal elements of the pseudo-classic theory with the richer proportions of the Elizabethan theatre. He has cut out the multiplicity of scene, which at once adds to and detracts from the force of *Antony and Cleopatra,* and he has reduced the feelings of the chief characters to such standards as his contemporaries could understand and appreciate. It is undeniable that he has lost all of that high ardour and passionate romance which breathes from every scene of Shakespeare's play, but it is equally undeniable that he has succeeded in

giving to this theme a more coherent and formed treatment than is apparent in the earlier tragedy. *All for Love* in its own style, but only in its own style, is a drama worthy of being considered alongside of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Dryden's other tragedies have hardly the same strength and fervour. *Amboyna* (1673) is a crude tragedy written purely as a piece of propaganda against the Dutch; *Troilus and Cressida, or, Truth found too late* (1679) is merely a tragic treatment of Shakespeare's peculiar tragi-comedy; while *Don Sebastian, King of Portugal* (1689; printed 1690) and *Cleomenes, the Spartan Heroe* (1692) mark returns to heroic sentiments, even although these heroic sentiments are couched in blank verse instead of rime. Altogether Dryden's efforts in the realm of tragedy are disappointing. His best work was cast in the form of the heroic drama, a type of theatrical literature which was manifestly unsuitable for the enunciation of the loftiest and profoundest passions. The later dramas were written obviously for the sake of making money, and even *All for Love* shows the author too deeply fettered by the conditions under which it was written. This greatest of all the Restoration writers seemed to fail in the theatre. He had the dramatic sense developed to a high degree; but, in that age of conflicting ideals, Dryden never secured for himself a definite aim and a conscious purpose. His dramas at best lack true individuality.

As tragedy developed after 1679 several marked tendencies become apparent, tendencies which are inherent in *All for Love* and *The Orphan*. The first is pseudo-classicism, leading toward strictness of form, including the retention of the three unities, and toward chill of dialogue and simplification of plot. The other, which takes diverse forms, is the movement toward pathos and pity. These two tendencies dominated practically the whole of tragic productivity from the last decades of the seventeenth century on to the latter part of the eighteenth. The pseudo-classical school, at least that part of the pseudo-classical school which held most strictly to the 'rules' of propriety and of good conduct, hardly obtained a secure footing in the

seventeenth century itself, and even in the Augustan age proper (from the reign of Anne to the last quarter of the eighteenth century) pseudo-classicism in the theatre seems to have been rather an undesirable element. The regular pseudo-classical plays were duly mounted and revived, but none proved genuinely popular, unless we assume that the success of Addison's *Cato* (1714) was due entirely to its own merits, and had nothing in it savouring of political prejudice. If the more extreme pseudo-classicists, however, had little hold during the Restoration period, the rules so cherished by them penetrated through all the realms of drama and came to influence greatly both comedy and tragedy. The simplified form of the Antony and Cleopatra story found in *All for Love* is directly traceable to the influence of these pseudo-classical ideals. All attempts were made to avoid romantic profusion of material, and gradually, with this simplification, there disappeared that richness of passion, that excess of emotion, from which the romantic genius ultimately takes its rise.

As a species of reaction to this, although frequently it took a course parallel to and even joined paths with the pseudo-classical movement, we find the development of pathetic and pitiful sentiments and scenes. This tendency has already become apparent in *The Orphan,* has been noted, indeed, several decades previously in some dramas of the period 1610–40. Now, however, it flourished most abundantly. Love and honour themes had probably led men to stress more deeply than in Elizabethan days the subject of amorous passion, so that by the end of the seventeenth century hardly any tragedy was penned which did not introduce as a main theme a tale of love, happy or disastrous. Inevitably this weakened the tone of late seventeenth-century tragedy. Instead of the vast, cataclysmic, elemental emotions, varied and diverse, which marked the tragedies of Shakespeare we find constant plaints and passages of amorous bombast which are difficult to read and in the sincerity of which we cannot believe. In accordance with this change of atmosphere went an

alteration of tragic plan. In Elizabethan times tragedy had been predominatingly masculine; the hero formed the centre and keynote of the play; on him all attention was focused. With the entrance of love into the theatrical arena the heroine rapidly came to take a more prominent place. Her progress, however, was hindered in the days of pure heroics, by the presence of martial prowess from which—for few heroines were Amazons—she was banished. The advent of pathos, on the other hand, distinctly favoured the heroine, who came more and more to usurp the prominent position, until toward the end of the century we reach the 'she-tragedy,' where the hero has almost completely vanished and a woman figure dominates the entire action of the drama. This final culmination was not attained until the eighteenth century, when Rowe fully established the type, but the tendency can clearly be traced in the preceding decades. The most important predecessor of Rowe in this sphere was John Banks, who, starting with a couple of heroic dramas—*The Rival Kings: or The Loves of Oroondates and Statira* (1677) and *The Destruction of Troy* (1678; printed 1679)—passed from those to pen a series of pathetic plays on historical themes. *The Unhappy Favourite: or The Earl of Essex* (1681; printed 1682) was the first of these, followed by *Vertue Betray'd: or, Anna Bullen* (1682), *The Island Queens: Or, The Death of Mary, Queen of Scotland* (printed 1684), and *The Innocent Usurper; or, The Death of the Lady Jane Gray* (printed 1694). The titles of these tragedies clearly show their general scope. None is remarkable for great intrinsic excellence, although Banks was a more capable writer than is usually supposed, but their historical value is literally enormous. Several of these plays remained long on the stage; Rowe certainly was acquainted with them; so that Banks became one of the most powerful forces in the development of eighteenth-century tragedy. It is not too much to say that in several dramatic schools his influence, direct and indirect, for forty or fifty years after his death was second only to that of Shakespeare himself.

(iii) Opera and Spectacle

These heroic, pathetic, and other movements all combined with a general operatic tendency. Scenery had, as we have seen, come into general use in this period of the Restoration, and along with this advent of scenery we have noted the tendency toward exaggeration and artificiality of plot and character. The age still retained that enthusiasm for music which was so marked a feature of the Elizabethan period, and this enthusiasm for music added to the other movements indicated above readily made way for the elaboration of the opera. To trace this development accurately it is here necessary to return to the dramatic work of Sir William D'Avenant, who is one of the inaugurators both of the heroic tragedy and of the opera. It has been already noted that he was the only person authorized during the Commonwealth *régime* to arrange theatrical performances, and no doubt he was enabled to do so only by representing that his performances were not of plays, but of musical entertainments. *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656), along with *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* (1658), and *The History of S^r Francis Drake* (1658; printed 1659), was a musical entertainment of this sort, written in rime and designed, on the lines of Italian opera, to be sung in recitative and *aria*. As a play, *The Siege of Rhodes* had its influence upon Dryden and other masters of the heroic tragedy, but it is valuable besides that for its position in the development of English opera. The new scenes, the accompaniment of the orchestra, the pleasant airs, all attracted the attention of playgoers, and before a few decades had passed other writers were striving along the same path. The first approach toward the opera in the Restoration period proper was in the direction of Shakespearian adaptation. *The Tempest,* after a considerable amount of sophisticated alteration and addition, was made operatic by Dryden and Shadwell; *Macbeth* similarly was operatized by an unknown author, who has been conjecturally identified with D'Avenant. The adaptations proved popular, as is witnessed by the numerous

references, scathing as well as flattering, to the new fashion. That popularity inevitably led toward the composition of original operas of an even more ornate cast. Dryden, always ready to adopt a current novelty likely of success, penned his *Albion and Albanius* (1685) and his *King Arthur: or, The British Worthy* (1692). D'Urfey, Settle, and others vied with one another in producing similar works, each more gorgeous and full of telling incidents and novelties than the last. These operas, it may be observed, were all on the English plan, and were commonly designated by the title 'dramatic' in contradistinction to the 'Italian' operas, to produce which in England attempts had already been made. The cardinal difference between the two types lies in the presence or absence of recitative. All the dialogue of the dramatic opera is spoken; such operas are merely spectacular plays with many incidental songs and full accompaniments of instrumental music. The Italian operas, on the other hand, are designed wholly for singing, no spoken dialogue being permitted unless in some occasional scenes of a comic character. With the aid of Purcell the former type held the field all through the Restoration period, although a French opera in recitative was produced in London in the early seventies of the century; but once the fashion for opera had fully established itself it was inevitable that efforts should be made to introduce on the London stage some of those productions which had charmed audiences in Rome, in Florence, and in Paris.

These efforts culminated in the first years of the eighteenth century, and, although the account of them ought strictly to have been included in the following chapter of this book, it may be well to glance here at the early development of the Italian form. The approach was made at first through translation. Two theatrical workers, MacSwiny and Motteux, seem to have been chiefly instrumental in preparing for the stage the first two operas of this type, *Arsinoe* (1705) and *Camilla* (1706). The singers in these were all English, and the original music was adapted to the conditions under which the works were produced. Soon, however, it was found that the stock of English vocalists was

limited; every one praised the voices of Italy; and accordingly high sums were offered by the managers to tempt away from the Continent a few of the more noted singers. Even yet the production of operas in the Italian tongue was delayed, the managers adopting the expedient of making the English singers perform in English and the Italians in Italian. The confusions and absurd situations which arose from this convention may be found chronicled satirically by Addison in several well-known *Spectator* papers. Such a compromise could not endure for long, so that we are not surprised to find within a few years the appearance of Italian operas in all their original glory. Once established upon the stage, these operas definitely held their position. Händel came to England and aided in arousing still more enthusiasm for the type; hardly a year passed by without the production of several new works; the Italian opera became the fashionable haunt of society, and in its own way aided in the weakening of native dramatic work.

The advent of the Italian opera had several well-marked influences upon the English stage. The dramatic operas were rapidly cast into the background. *The Tempest* and *The Prophetess* still appeared every season at one or another theatre, but few new works of the same class were written. While the older successes still retained something of their charm, the form was clearly felt to be old-fashioned, and men, when they tried to write something which might rival the Italian works, penned their verses in recitative and *aria*. Beyond this, however, the new fashion placed its mark upon the age. The success of the opera-house frequently caused a corresponding failure of the other theatres. Upper-class society in the eighteenth century was often plagued with the curse of indigence, and the high prices charged for opera subscriptions left many without the means of patronizing regular plays. A new opera, too, took away a good part of the spectators from the ordinary theatres, so that the many complaints which were uttered against the novelty were not by any means ill founded.

On the dramatic literature both of the late seventeenth

and of the eighteenth centuries this operatic *furore* had its marked influence. The spectacular features of these productions led managers to attempt the reproduction of some of the most startling effects in regular plays, led dramatists, too, to fill their comedies and farces with many more songs than had been normal in preceding years. The plays of D'Urfey are thus richly interlarded with numerous lyrics of a diverse character. The musical elements in these comedies, added to the general popularity of the opera, unquestionably laid the basis of that typical eighteenth-century dramatic development, the ballad-farce or the ballad-opera. It were proceeding too far ahead to enter into a discussion of *The Beggar's Opera* and of its successors in this chapter, but a true appreciation of Gay's efforts cannot be secured without a realization of the importance in those years of the Italian opera.

CHAPTER III

COMEDY IN RESTORATION TIMES

Comedies of Humours and of Intrigue

THE heroic tragedy and the opera gave no great masterpiece to the theatre. Some features of beauty may be discovered in both, but there is to be found no single work of either kind capable of being placed alongside of *The Orphan* or of *Venice Preserv'd*. True creative power had left the realm of serious drama; all that is new and invested with individuality of expression is to be sought for in the sphere of comedy. The reason for this is not far to seek. The age, as has been shown previously, had abandoned the ways of poetry and was searching for truth not in the world of the imagination, but in the world of common sense and reason. The rich music of the Elizabethan singers and the bizarre stanzas of the metaphysical poets were alike displaced in favour of the heroic couplet, a verse-form which demanded for its successful execution little beyond a good ear, a sense of proportion, and a vivid intellect. With the appearance of this reign of common sense, moreover, a new prose was discovered, a prose fitted for the enunciation of logical thoughts and witty fancies. More and more men turned to this prose for a medium in which to express their desires, so that comedy, that species of drama which alone permitted of prose dialogue, became the most typical form of theatrical literature, and, at the same time, the form most capable of expressing the very temper and spirit of the age. Beyond Otway the Restoration period could produce no tragic dramatist of the first rank; but in comedy it nourished several of the greatest of English masters, who between them succeeded in making this one of the most notable eras in the history of the theatre.

It is this age which is associated with the rise and develop-

ment of the comedy of manners, in the hands of Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar; but we must not forget, in any enthusiasm we may feel for these dramatists, that, after all, their works form but an infinitesimal portion of the many comedies produced during these years. None of the first three wrote more than four dramas each, and the latter two composed most of their plays in the eighteenth century. The comedy of manners, which they succeeded in establishing and which marks the acme of comedy in that age, did not by any means dominate the world of the theatre; it was rivalled by many another form which proved as popular, if not more popular, with contemporary audiences.

Among these types the old comedy of humours took an important place. Jonson still held his position as chief of comic dramatists, and his intellectualism made full appeal to an age weary of degenerate imagination. There were some who placed him, because of his art, higher than Shakespeare; and even Dryden, much as he revered the name of Shakespeare, did not dare to place the one above the other. The influence of Jonson on the period is twofold. We find, in the first place, a number of comedies obviously modelled directly upon his style; and, besides these, we discover many dramas which, while not prevailingly Jonsonian in essence, betray clearly the influence of his work in dialogue, scene, or character. Even the masters of the comedies of manners frequently showed that they had learned part of their art at least from the early seventeenth-century playwright.

Of all the pure Jonsonians Thomas Shadwell is without doubt the chief. No man more insisted on Jonson's greatness; no man attempted more to reproduce something of the atmosphere of *Every Man in his Humour* or of *Bartholomew Fair*. Shadwell has long been neglected. It is probable that his quarrel with Dryden proved fatal to him, and he has come down to us as an unmitigated fool who never even deviated into sense. That this is a false judgment will be admitted by anyone who has read any of Shadwell's work. The truth is that he was no mean

descendant of Jonson. His style, certainly, is rough, lacking that refinement and careful polish which distinguishes the more masterly Augustan prose, but he had a true *flair* for the theatre, and a considerable skill in the depicting of humorous types. In some ways he is the truest mirror of the age that we possess. Congreve may show more brilliantly the fine wit of the time, but his very brilliance takes away from the reality of the portrait; Shadwell, rising to less exalted heights, displays more accurately the ordinary existence of his age. Starting with a decided success in *The Sullen Lovers: Or, the Impertinents* (1668) he continued a chequered career up to his death in 1692, his last play, *The Volunteers: or The Stock Jobbers* (1693), appearing just after his death. Shadwell's dramatic work is of various types, for he patronized opera, pastoral, and tragedy as well as his more favoured *métier* of comedy. In the comic sphere, moreover, he allowed, particularly in his later life, several elements unconnected with the Jonsonian style to enter in. There are in his works characteristics which have led Professor Saintsbury to claim for him the title of a father of the comedy of manners, and there are traceable likewise some sentimental touches which show that Shadwell felt the impress of the changing spirit of the age. Of his eighteen dramas three or four stand forward as deserving of more particular attention—the early *Sullen Lovers, The Humorists* (1670; printed 1671), *Epsom Wells* (1672; printed 1673), *The Virtuoso* (1676), *The Squire of Alsatia* (1688), and *Bury Fair* (1689). In each of these we meet with a lively story of contemporary life, a multitude of eccentric and extravagant humours, and a love-plot of none too pure a nature. It must be confessed that Shadwell's plays are somewhat vulgar, for he is too true a child of his time to be prurient or puritanical. There is not, however, in his works any objectionable suggestiveness. He is frank and outspoken, and whatever of vulgarity may offend us to-day is seen to be the result of a bluntness of expression rather than a definitely vitiated taste. Shadwell's main defect arises from his over-slavish imitation of Jonson; never does he seem capable of throwing off

the tyranny of his master and striking out on lines of his own. In thus servilely following the Elizabethan dramatist Shadwell was, perhaps, somewhat out of date. Very few besides himself, except one or two writers whose age rendered them more pre- than post-Restoration in temperament, deliberately adopted the humours style in all its original harshness.

Of these writers Sir Robert Howard brother-in-law of Dryden, is first in point of time. His one pure comedy *The Committee* (1622; printed 1665), a moderately good-humoured attack upon Puritan hypocrisy, is a well-written and vivacious piece of work, with characters not too heavily exaggerated and containing one particularly popular figure in Teg, or Teague, a loyal Irish servant and ancestor of many similar types in later years. With Howard may be mentioned the rougher and more plebeian John Lacy, who in *The Old Troop: or, Monsieur Raggou* (*c.* 1665; printed 1672) contributed another anti-Puritan satire to the theatre. Besides this play Lacy has left us an adaptation of Shakespeare in *Sauny the Scott: or, The Taming of the Shrew* (1667; printed 1698), one of Molière in *The Dumb Lady, or, The Farrier Made Physician* (1669; printed 1672), and a more original work in *Sir Hercules Buffoon, or, The Poetical Squire* (1684). All of these are marked by the same features, a tendency to follow Jonson in the depicting of exaggerated humours, a certain roughness and vulgarity of texture, and a decided propensity toward farce. This last characteristic of Lacy's plays may be due to the fact that he himself was an actor, and consequently was fully alive to all the possibilities inherent in stage action for the summoning forth of laughter. A companion of Lacy in the fields of farcical humours is John Wilson, whose comedy of *The Cheats* (1662; printed 1664) has lately been rescued from the oblivion into which it fell in the nineteenth century. It has certainly an amusing plot and some fairly ludicrous dialogue, but it is marred, like most of these Jonsonian works, by coarseness and lack of delicacy in style and in treatment.

As has already been noted, these comedies of humours,

even from the first, were by way of being a trifle out of date. The age had attained an added refinement in language and in outer culture, so that the temper of the Elizabethan period, more manly but less delicate, seemed almost 'Gothic' to the airy Cavaliers of the Stuart Court. Dryden consequently was acting more in accordance with the changing tendencies of the age when, in his comedies, he strove to unite the strength of Jonson, the courtly spirit of Beaumont and Fletcher, and the new air of intellectual wit. Had Dryden possessed more of the debonair, outwardly brilliant, but not necessarily profound, temperament of Etherege and of his successors he might have succeeded in founding the comedy of manners. As it is, his undercurrent of emotion, his lack of fine wit, his inability to throw himself completely into the thoughtless follies and amusements of his time, prevented him from capturing the precise note of the manners school. He stands as a link between the earlier and the later, incapable of casting off his enthusiasm for the Elizabethan drama, yet not content merely to reproduce, as Wilson and Lacy strove to do, the exact style of the earlier period. With *The Wild Gallant* (1663; printed 1669) Dryden commenced his theatrical career. This play is the nearest of all his comedies to previous models, the inspiration for it having been obviously derived from Jonson's dramas; but even here the Restoration author showed that he felt the needs of his own age. In painting the portraits of Lady Constant and Loveby he displayed clearly enough his consciousness that the Stuart society for whom he was writing demanded something more than the rough satire which Jonson had thrown into his early seventeenth-century plays. *The Wild Gallant* is not a good comedy, but it shows the main features of Dryden's style, features he was to delineate more perfectly in *The Rival Ladies* (1664) and in *Secret Love, or The Maiden Queen* (1667; printed 1668). Both of these last-mentioned plays are tragi-comedies in the sense that a wholly serious and almost heroic plot is paralleled by another theme as typically comic. It is the latter alone which concerns us here. In *Secret Love* Dryden reached

the acme of his comic portraiture. Celadon and Florimel are well-nigh perfect presentations of those characters adumbrated in *The Wild Gallant*. The air of careless abandon, the hilarious wit, the setting free of all conventional restraint—all features of his earliest play—are here crystallized in the two figures which will always remain monuments of his power and genius. In those figures Dryden comes closest to the spirit of the Etheregian comedy. In his later life he attempted to reproduce his earlier successes. Wildblood and Jacintha in *An Evening's Love, or the Mock Astrologer* (1668; printed 1671), Palamede and Doralice in *Marriage A-la-mode* (1672; printed 1673), Ascanio and Hippolita in *The Assignation; or, Love in a Nunnery* (1672; printed 1673), Mercury and Phædra in *Amphitryon: or, The Two Socia's* (1690), all are copies of these originals and all, despite many variations and truly comic features, fail to secure the first gaiety and abandoned hilarity of *Secret Love*. In these plays Dryden shows plainly his position in the development of the comic theatre. He owes a debt to Jonson, chiefly in his minor characters, although in *S^r Martin Mar-all, or the Feign'd Innocence* (1667; printed 1668) he produced a play in which the principal characters are humours; he owes, too, a debt to Beaumont and Fletcher, his main plots being framed on the style of the comedy of intrigue; above all, he strikes out on a path of his own in striving to delineate something of the new spirit of the age. In thus fusing together many diverse elements Dryden did a great service to the English theatre, but the very fact that he did so has to a certain extent taken from his posthumous fame. His comedies, fine as they are and excellently fitted for stage representation, have not that individual flavour which is so noticeable in the works of Etherege and of Congreve. There is, too, one other thing which makes them less acceptable to modern readers. Congreve dwells almost wholly in the world of the intellect; his amours are not of passion, not of the heart, but of the head. Dryden, as has been noted, still retained something of the Elizabethan age in him, and as a consequence his scenes of licence may strike us as being

often more immoral than similar scenes in the comedies of manners. This statement, of course, cannot be pressed too far, as many situations given by the dramatists of manners are as vulgar as anything in Dryden's works, but it seems that there is at least a modicum of truth in the assertion.

Few of the many other dramatists who patronized comedy during these years can be dealt with here. Most of the ordinary works written for the theatres are dull and uninteresting and demand no special attention. There are, however, a few particular writers who deserve at least brief mention. Of these Mrs Aphra Behn is the first. As Shadwell is the representative of the comedy of humours in this period, she is the chief representative of the pure comedy of intrigue. Her dramatic career started in 1670 with the appearance of a tragi-comedy, *The Forc'd Marriage, or the Jealous Bridegroom,* but her chief activities in later years were to be confined to the realms of comedy proper. Her most popular success was *The Rover: Or, The Banish't Cavaliers* (1677; second part 1680), but besides this she has several plays well worth reading, especially *The Dutch Lover* (1673), *The Town-Fopp: or Sir Timothy Tawdrey* (1676; printed 1677), *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), and *The City-Heiress: or, Sir Timothy Treat-all* (1682). There is little of wit in any of these comedies, but there is an amount of intrigue cleverly worked out and a decided skill in comic portraiture. Vivacity is her chief merit; a bustling movement dominates all her works. This species of comedy of intrigue, made popular by the Spanish tastes of the Court, was adopted by a few other writers, such as John Crowne in *Sir Courtly Nice: or, It Cannot Be* (1685), but it was not taken up again by any author with the same enthusiasm until the appearance of Mrs. Centlivre in the eighteenth century.

Of little intrinsic importance, but of considerable historical value, two minor dramatists, Nahum Tate and Edward Ravenscroft, must now be considered. Both were varied playwrights, producing tragedies and tragi-comedies as well as purely comic works, but their merit lies almost wholly in the last-mentioned species. To them more than

to any others we owe the development and establishment of English farce. *A Duke and No Duke* (1684; printed 1685) and *Cuckolds-Haven: or, an Alderman No Conjurer* (1685) by Tate, and the series of lighter pieces by Ravenscroft starting with *The Citizen turn'd Gentleman* (1672) and ending with *The Anatomist: or, the Sham Doctor* (1697), provided the theatres with sufficient farcical comedies in the last two decades of the seventeenth century. In its initial stages the farce was not very original in theme and plan. The majority of Tate's and Ravenscroft's works are merely crude renderings of previous comedies. *A Duke and No Duke* is thus an adaptation of a comedy by Cockain, and *Cuckolds-Haven* of Jonson's *Eastward Ho; The Citizen turn'd Gentleman* is derived from *Le bourgeois gentilhomme,* and *The Anatomist* plainly shows its indebtedness to Molière. This development of farce, indeed, better than any other type of drama, shows the weakening taste of the age. The ordinary spectators were growing weary of even the fine forms of comedy. They were better pleased with the clownish antics of a popular comedian than with brilliant dialogue or subtle delineation of character; they desired their Molière and their Jonson in skeleton shape rather than clad in the living form with the full flush of vitality upon them.

This farcical strain, added to features of a spectacular and operatic kind, is to be found likewise in the plays of Thomas D'Urfey, a writer perhaps better known for his songs and shorter lyrics than for his dramatic work. D'Urfey is a more capable playwright than either Ravenscroft or Tate, but his plays are, like theirs, mainly adaptations of other works, or else patchworks of farcical scenes taken from diverse sources. *Madam Fickle: or the Witty False One* (1676; printed 1677), his first play, is thus merely a collection of incidents taken from at least four early seventeenth-century dramas, and the same is true of his next play, *The Fool Turn'd Critick* (1676; printed 1678). D'Urfey's works are numerous, but all have the same characteristics—a plentiful supply of theatrical wit, a large use of action for comic effect, a decided tendency to trust

rather to previous plots than to original invention, and a considerable employment of spectacular and musical devices. It will be noted later that in his very last plays, written after 1688, there is traceable another element—the beginning of a sentimental note which was to become the predominant feature of a whole school of dramatic writing in the eighteenth century.

(ii) The Comedy of Manners

In thus dealing with the minor comic authors of the Restoration period we have to a certain extent outlined the background for a brief analysis of the comedy of manners. So far several main tendencies have become apparent—the comedy of humours, the comedy of intrigue, and farce. Besides these there has been indicated a tentative movement toward a newer style in the comedies written by Dryden. Farce, as is evident, is largely a degeneration of true comic elements, and of it the masters of the comedy of manners made no use; but humours and intrigue enter freely into their works. Above all, they elaborated that new note struck by Dryden, filling their plays with a careless, frank, and debonair wit which marks them out as the inaugurators of a new comic species. This comedy of manners is almost wholly intellectual, emotion entering in only with Wycherley to colour the hard, crisp repartee and continual flashing of verbal rapier-thrust. It is, also, wholly aristocratic, the manners displayed being not those of men in general (such as Jonson showed in his humours), but the affectations and cultured veneer of fine society. For these men a manner was not a trait native to an individual, but a quality acquired by him from social intercourse. This fine society, thus mirrored in the comedy of manners, as it was the society of Charles II's Court, was *dilettante,* careless, intent only on pleasure and amorous intrigue, so that the comedy which depicted it has an air of abandon and of immorality which is markedly different from the manlier temper of the Elizabethan stage. For this not too much blame may be cast upon it. Comedy,

have said many critics from classical days to the time of Shakespeare, is above all other things a mirror of the age, and in displaying the life of their time Etherege and his followers were but adopting a sphere which had been occupied by many before them. If we condemn the society of the Restoration Court we need not thereby condemn the dramatists of that period; their object was to display the fashionable life of their time, not to indicate the superior mental and moral qualities of a past age or to prophesy concerning the improvements of the future. On a first reading, therefore, these comedies of manners may strike many as being immoral and vulgar; but for students of literature a true historical perspective must be gained. There are many characteristics of the Elizabethan period which now seem to us brutal and unrefined, but we do not cease to read Shakespeare because these are reflected in his plays. One of the greatest secrets of the study of literature is to regard individual works not in the light of present-day theories and of present-day beliefs, but in the spirit of the age in which they were produced. It would be almost as absurd to refuse to read Æschylus because he was a pagan as to refuse to read Etherege because he was a courtier of the age of Charles II. There are, certainly, passages in the comedies of manners which overstep all bounds of decency and of good taste, where the dramatists have gone beyond even the excesses of the society of their time, and such passages can now be relished by none save a deliberate lover of pornographic literature. Scenes of this kind, however, are on the whole rarer in the comedies of manners than in other species of comedy during this age, and the determined intellectualism of the writers takes away to a certain extent from the evil effect of the particular scenes.

As is well known, the first true representative of this style was the courtier Sir George Etherege, who in 1664 brought forward *The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub,* a kind of tragi-comedy, and followed that with *She wou'd if she cou'd* (1668), and *The Man of Mode, or, S^r^ Fopling Flutter* (1676). The first of these may be regarded as an

experimental effort. In style it is somewhat similar to Dryden's *Secret Love,* many of the scenes being written in rimed couplets. With his second and third plays, however, Etherege moved boldly into the world he had created and established as his own. Both deal with real types of the Restoration period, the ideal of the age being set forth in the fine gentlemen and witty ladies, and satire entering in at contemporary follies such as are depicted in the person of Sir Fopling Flutter. Etherege's comedy is, according to modern standards, unquestionably immoral, and even Addison in the age of Queen Anne saw fit to castigate him for sundry lapses into indecency. On the other hand, it is a comedy of almost perfect artistry, and that artistry takes away from much of its evil tone. Etherege has not the *finesse* of Congreve; his style is harder and possesses greater strength; but in his own way he is Congreve's peer. If the one has greater brilliance of dialogue and a more variegated fancy, the other has a greater variety of incidents and a surer touch in realistic portraiture.

The new form of comedy, after Etherege, was not adopted by any individual writer until the appearance of William Wycherley, although by the seventies of the century many other authors were displaying in isolated scenes and characters the impress of the Etheregian style. Wycherley's plays are four in number, *Love in a Wood, or, St James's Park* (1671; printed 1672), *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1672; printed 1673), *The Country-Wife* (1675), and *The Plain-Dealer* (1676; printed 1677). Of these four the first three are intimately related together as displaying features distinct from others shown in *The Plain-Dealer.* These first three are all almost entirely in the Etherege style, dealing with a world of fops and fools and gallants, revelling in the none too honest intrigues of the time and packed, as in the notorious 'China' scene in *The Country-Wife,* with innuendos. There can be no question but that Wycherley is indescribably vulgar, particularly when his scenes are translated to the stage. As reading plays they may not seem to have such a confirmed immoral tone as those of Etherege, but seen in the theatre their inherent

vulgarity is fully brought out.[1] There is not in these plays the airy wit of Etherege, but in place thereof we meet with the masterly hand of a true playwright. All of Wycherley's comedies are excellently constructed, and his portraiture is subtle and delicate. There is a sure touch in his treatment of character and of scene which shows him to have had a true *flair* for the theatre.

As important documents in the history of drama, however, these three early plays fade into insignificance when set beside *The Plain-Dealer*. Here Wycherley separates himself from the regular course of the comedy of manners, for inherently he had not the airy, care-free spirit of its other exponents. A Puritan with the veneer of a Restoration gentleman he has been called, and the phrase seems accurately to indicate his general position in life. He adopted the current modes of contemporary society, but at moments the native self asserted itself in him, and he attacked those vices which he himself had displayed before in comic wise. The first three plays are not, as has often been made out, prevailingly satiric. If Wycherley shows vice in them he shows it for the purpose of raising laughter. *The Plain-Dealer,* on the other hand, is not mainly comic in spirit; its chief note is that of bitter and often indignant satire. Its atmosphere is that of the Puritan rather than that of the Restoration gentleman. Manly, the hero is a portrait of strength designed in opposition to the weakened, degenerate, and often effeminate figures of the age. With *The Plain-Dealer* Wycherley secured his greatest triumph. The Restoration audiences did not shrink from satire; possibly they regarded it in the light of another thrill wherewith to amuse themselves still further. Wycherley accordingly was universally acclaimed even by those who through their own actions were among the most debauched companions of the dissolute Charles.

[1] I take the opportunity here of correcting an impression of *The Country-Wife* given in *A History of Restoration Drama* (p. 226). The recent production of that play by the Phœnix Society has caused me to reverse the judgment there given concerning the intellectualism of the work. Horner is a character who may be a facetious companion in the study, but certainly he makes an unpleasant figure upon the stage.

Wycherley, said these men, had been sent to lash the crying age; but the old intrigues, the old excesses, proceeded merrily along, unimpeded by the dramatist's suddenly awakened horror.

If Wycherley marks a certain breakaway from the typical manners comedy as established by Etherege, William Congreve takes it back once more to its original paths. Congreve has nothing of Wycherley's puritanical temper, and he has less of the fundamental strength of Etherege's manner; his whole power is centred on an airiness of fancy and a delicacy of pointed style, not necessarily so dramatic as the style of his two predecessors, but eminently adapted to the expression of the conventional conversation of the fine society of his time. Four plays in all keep his name alive: *The Old Batchelour* (1693), *The Double Dealer* (1693; printed 1694), *Love for Love* (1695), and *The Way of the World* (1700). Of these *The Double Dealer* is almost a tragi-comedy, and does not possess the rich sparkle of the other three. With *The Old Batchelor,* however, a new note was struck, not completely an innovation, certainly, for it is but the atmosphere of Etherege transformed—something finer, more delicate, more scintillating than anything that had gone before. Many of the characters may be little else than humours, but that cannot blind us to the perfection of the prose dialogue and to the sheer brilliance of the scenes. There is not much skill in construction, but no one had ever produced such a comedy replete with all the raciness of cultured, easy, debonair conversation. The literary success of *The Old Batchelor* was surpassed in Congreve's third play, *Love for Love,* with which the seceded actors under Betterton opened at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. In some ways *Love for Love* is his best comedy. There is in it a deliberately developed plot; the plot moves forward with a certainty which shows that its author had clear in his mind from the start the action of his work. The characters, too, are excellently delineated. Ben is a realistic study, and so is Miss Prue; Mrs Frail and Mrs Foresight are subtly differentiated. At the same time, the comedy as a whole appears to lack

any centralized purpose. At one moment we are in the world of artificiality, where social convention rules all, and manners reign; at another we are faced with reality, reality which impresses us as being more crass and sometimes brutal because of the artificial world with which it is mingled. While, therefore, the plot of *Love for Love* is Congreve's triumph, while some of the characters are his best drawn, while, even, a few of the isolated *bons mots* are among the finest and rarest expressions of his almost unique genius, the comedy as a whole fails when placed in juxtaposition to *The Way of the World.* In *The Way of the World* there is no false note. Millamant sails gloriously through it all, affected and fascinating; servants, fools, lovers, wits, all seem to take from her something of that air of modish triviality which belongs to the best scenes of the comedy of manners. We may condemn the realism of some of the character-portraits in this play; we may say that the plot is no plot, only a mere series of often impossible incidents designed simply to afford the author opportunity for uttering his streams of conceited metaphors and bewildering flights of intellectual fancy; but that can never prevent us from acknowledging *The Way of the World* as the most perfect example in English of a certain type of comic endeavour.

This was to be Congreve's last effort in the realm of comedy, and already there were gathering round him forces which were ultimately to destroy the fine fabric of this particular type. In 1698 Jeremy Collier startled actors, authors, and audiences with his *Short View of the Immorality and Prophaneness of the English Stage,* a work which was destined to lead to a long pamphlet controversy between those who upheld the licence of the Restoration drama and those who for moral or religious reasons desired to reform or overthrow the stage. In many ways the attack was well founded, even although Collier's arguments verge often upon the ridiculous; the truth that underlay his attack is made nowhere more apparent than in the replies of the poets arraigned at the bar of Nonconformist justice. Dryden, who had been specially singled out, magnanimously,

as was his way, confessed his errors, and without whining for mercy expressed his sorrow that pen of his had been guilty of errors he fully appreciated; others, not willing to acknowledge faults in their writings, scribbled hasty replies, but had nothing better to urge than the sect to which Collier belonged and the trivialities of some of his arguments. His main contentions were allowed for the most part to remain unchallenged. This fierce diatribe of a misoscenic Nonconformist minister would in all probability have remained unnoticed—would have hung heavy on the bookseller's hands—had it not come at a critical moment. In a later chapter attention will be called to the incipient sentimentalism of the late seventeenth century, and that incipient sentimentalism expressed in the drama of the time but corresponds to a general movement in the social life of upper-class circles. James II, with his Catholic propensities, was driven from the throne, and William had come to England with none of the great love of pleasure which had characterized Charles II. At least, if he indulged in pleasure he threw over it a cloak of decency and substituted hypocrisy for frankness. Whether his example was followed by the public at large or not, the truth remains that after the decease of Charles a certain outward veneer of morality covered the excesses of society. Men's tongues became more circumspect, if their thoughts remained the same, and affected blushes took the place of the blunt sophistication of the ladies of previous days. Add to these facts that the middle classes, always with the remnants of Puritanism clinging about them, were assuming an ever greater part in the life of the age, their wealth conquering the erstwhile supercilious disdain of the aristocracy, and we must plainly see that a new age was being born.

Everything conspired together, and the comedy of manners, licentious, vain, worldly, found itself attacked on all sides. The days of Congreve, the days of thoughtless, brilliant, careless wit, were over, and the old free grace was never completely to be recaptured. For a time the typical form of Restoration comedy strove to retain some-

thing of the old abandon, but it soon flickered out, its light completely dimmed by the rising radiance of sentimentalism, good and bad.

Among those who aided in keeping alive something of the spirit of the Congrevian comedy were George Farquhar and Sir John Vanbrugh, men whose careers stretched from a period contemporaneous with the Collier attack on to the middle of the reign of Queen Anne. Farquhar's first play, *Love and a Bottle,* was produced in 1699, his last, *The Beaux Stratagem,* in 1707; Vanbrugh's *The Relapse: or, Virtue in Danger* appeared in 1696, his last farces in the early years of the eighteenth century. The careers of both these men are alike, and, taken together, they prove the general trend of theatrical tastes. Both commenced in the seventeenth century with largely immoral comedies, full of wit and striving to capture the fine grace that had distinguished the Stuart Court; both, as they progressed, showed with frequent touches of satire and cynicism a descent to farce and sentimentalism. Not that the two had precisely similar natures. Farquhar is at one and the same time nearer to the spirit of Congreve and more foppish than Vanbrugh. He has, in *The Constant Couple* (1699), in *The Inconstant* (1702), and in *The Beaux' Stratagem,* caught something of the true manners style. His plots are more carefully elaborated than are those of Congreve, but he retains at least a reflection of the Congreve wit. In *The Twin Rivals* (1702) and in *The Recruiting Officer* (1706), on the other hand, he displays clearly the impress of the newer age. The first is deeply tinged with a hypocritical sentimentalism, and the second has a realistic touch quite alien to the comedy of manners. Vanbrugh is much more robust than Farquhar, but that robustness removes him from the ranks of Congreve and leads him to draw comedy down from the high levels it had held to the lower depths of farce. More than any other of the playwrights mentioned in this chapter he relies upon action for comic effect. The plots of his comedies are designed not, as Congreve's were, for the expression of fancies of the mind, but for the elaboration of comic situations independent of the dialogue of

the play. This tendency in his art is not so noticeable in his early works, *The Relapse, The Provok'd Wife* (1697), and *Æsop* (1696–7), nor is it especially apparent in *The Confederacy* (1705) or in *The Mistake* (1705), but it is abundantly evident in *Squire Trelooby,* a farce executed by Vanbrugh, Congreve, and Walsh out of Molière's *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac,* and in *The Country House* (1704), another farce taken from Dancourt. Like Farquhar, also, Vanbrugh turned to a type of sentimentalism, evidently insincere, in *The False Friend* (1702). The truth is that men of Farquhar's and Vanbrugh's calibre did not know where to stand. They had lost freedom of action in the conflicting moods of the time. Spectators, perhaps, were just as pleasure-loving as they had been in the days of Charles II, but there were now societies for the reformation of manners, and statutes against oaths, and other dreadful things to be feared. The efforts in the older style were, therefore, bound to be only half-hearted, or, if indulged in boldly, were sure to be followed by a succeeding moment of painful reflection. The Restoration drama may be immoral and vulgar, but it possesses the divine gift of laughter, and that gift, because of the rising sentimental and moral movement, was destined for many years to disappear in favour of impossible disquisitions on human virtue, artificial sentimentalizings, and inordinate scenes of pathos and pity.

PART IV

DRAMA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER I

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AUDIENCE

FUNDAMENTALLY the theatres and the stage methods in the eighteenth century were the same as those employed in the later Restoration period. Some innovations here and there may be discerned—new methods of staging, new lighting effects—but such in no wise call for detailed attention here. The only alteration which may perhaps demand passing mention is the tendency after the middle century to erect theatres of increasing capacity. This tendency, it is true, had been started far back in the midst of the reign of Charles II with the building of the massive Dorset Garden playhouse, and was continued by Vanbrugh in his ill-designed theatre in the Haymarket, but in those early years this was countered by two facts. The first is that such theatres did not suit the purpose for which they were built; instead of bringing in more money to the patentees or managers (as from their additional seating accommodation was expected) they often gathered together barely such an audience as would pay for the music and the candles. The second is that alongside of these larger theatres smaller structures, and structures usually more favoured by the spectators, were continually springing up—the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, the Little Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the Little Theatre in Goodman's Fields. These smaller theatres kept alive the love of subtle acting and the love of good plays. Here the glorious line of our drama could well be displayed; here Garrick and other actors only less famous made their *débuts*. With the Licensing Act of 1737, how-

ever, these lesser theatres were technically, if not practically, silenced, and the drama became centred in Drury Lane and in Covent Garden. As these underwent their Phœnix-like alterations they grew in size, until a time came when subtle acting was impossible, when the hero and the heroine had to roar to galleries far distant from them, when delicate comedy and awe-inspiring tragedy alike failed to appeal because of the very vastness of the playhouses. This tendency, it is true, affects more largely the early nineteenth-century drama than the drama of the eighteenth century, but the movements which led to it are already apparent in this period, and its evil effects are plainly visible in the last few decades, which synchronize with the seething of romantic sentiment and the outbreak of evolution in France.

More important for our purpose is an examination of the typical audience of the time. It has already been noted that a change was coming over society in the latter years of the seventeenth century, a change which operated disastrously upon the fortunes of the comedy of manners. This change was fully established in the reigns of Anne and the Georges. Anne was not interested in the play-houses; the first of the Georges could not have understood a word had he gone to the theatre: and as a consequence the actors, in search of a patron, turned from the King to the public. No longer were they his Majesty's servants in anything but name. A monarch no longer moved in their ranks, granting them monetary rewards, providing them with raiment, suggesting themes to the dramatists. Performers and playwrights were, therefore, both thrown more upon the caprices of the public than ever they had been since Elizabethan times. The public, however, was not the public which had graced Shakespeare's stage; it was still composed largely of society and its servants. Lackeys filled the upper gallery—until, indeed, they were driven from that airy perch for sundry misdemeanours—ladies of Quality and their gallants flocked to the boxes, and critics and beaux thronged the pit. Yet we are no longer in Restoration times. For all that the

audience seemed unchanged, a great alteration had taken place. Many of the aristocratic families, partly because of excesses in the time of the Merry Monarch, partly because of ill-advised expenditure of money in the troublous days which preceded the succession of Queen Anne, had grown impoverished and no longer hesitated to replenish their coffers by judicious alliances with the wealthier *bourgeoisie*. Tradesmen and aristocrats thus gradually came together, the one seeking the distinction of birth, the other financial aid, so that there was no longer the usually strict cleavage which separated the Cavalier and the citizen under the Stuart *régime*. The theatre, as we have seen, was the plaything of society in the late seventeenth century, and now the tradesfolk, proud of their association with the highborn, came to attend this haunt of the People of Quality, possibly adopting most of the fashions and vices of these People of Quality, yet still retaining some of their inherited *bourgeois* and occasionally puritanical tenets and tastes. The union of these two forces led naturally toward a less homogeneous set of predilections than had distinguished the Restoration theatre. Society still enjoyed the licence of the comedy of manners; Shadwell, Dryden, Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve, even Ravenscroft and Tate, were still enjoyed; but the newer elements in the audience also delighted in moralizations, in approaches toward sentimentalism, in scenes of pathos. For many decades the struggle went on silently between the forces of intellectual callousness and those of incipient humanitarianism, destroying, as is the way with such struggles, the free expression of both the one and the other, but by the sixties and the seventies of the century the battle was won, and victory passed to the side of the sentimental movement. The middle classes, without consciously striving toward it, had gained the mastery.

In connexion with the external conditions of the theatre in this period another fact must be noted. The century was a century of great actors. Garrick and Mrs Siddons dominate them all, but beside those two are many only less gifted with genius than they. In this the eighteenth

century was not strikingly different from the latter part of the seventeenth, when Betterton and Mrs Barry, Mohun and Kynaston, Hart and Nell Gwyn, each laid his or her impress upon the drama of the age; but if we are to take it all in all the Augustan period is richer in this way than that which went before. The result is seen in the plays written for these actors and actresses. The heavy style of performance which characterized the stage previous to the Garrick era eminently fitted the Booths and Barrys of the time to interpret the equally heavy pseudo-classical tragedy; the airy modishness of a Mrs Oldfield was excellently fitted to express the tones of the 'genteel' comedy; Garrick's powers passed off on his audiences many a dull tragedy and duller comedy, even if at times they inspired a dramatist of talent to write something for him of true value. We can find only praise for the actors on account of their histrionic talents, but we may now censure them for their lack of discrimination and for their love of the effective part rather than of the artistic drama as a whole.

CHAPTER II

PSEUDO-CLASSIC AND PATHETIC TRAGEDY

FUNDAMENTALLY, of course, there is no direct break between the Restoration and the Augustan periods. The one merges imperceptibly into the other, and no strict lines of demarcation are anywhere discoverable. At the same time, society and tastes were changing, and the year 1700 forms as convenient a point from which to trace the alteration as any. In the realm of tragedy the eighteenth century inherited three or four traditions—that which may be styled heroic, that which led toward renewed appreciation of Shakespeare, the pathetic note (often in the form of English historical plays) as expressed by Banks and Otway, and the gradual development of pseudo-classical theory and practice. Of these, in the seventeenth century, the last-mentioned was infinitely the weakest. All the more chill pseudo-classical dramas written and produced before 1700 were unsuccessful; audiences still admired the bombast of Dryden, the pathos of Otway, the natural warmth of the Shakespearian style. With the eighteenth century, however, pseudo-classical theory became more and more predominant. Addison, Pope, Steele, and a host of lesser men, including Dennis and Gildon, more noted in their own day than in ours, aided in establishing firmly that strict set of laws which bound poetry for well over half a century and which still exercised its influence in the days of Byron. According to these rules imitation of the 'Ancients' was the best that a modern author could do. His plays must be irreproachable as regards the three unities of time, place, and action. He must not permit more than a certain number of characters to appear in his work. He must, above all, endeavour always to secure decency, propriety, order, and common sense. Intellectual precision rather than

passionate rhapsody must be aimed at. These rules dominated almost all the poetic and dramatic activity of the reigns of Anne and the early Georges, but dominated it as a force from without. Some writers may have found the pseudo-classic theory well to their tastes, but the spectators looked for something more inspiring, something more bombastic, than they could discover in the chill of the classical tragedy. We find, therefore, in this period a constant struggle proceeding between the pseudo-classicists and those who preferred other styles. The heroic tragedy still exercised its charm for the audience; imitations of Shakespeare are constantly making their appearance; Otway ruled over a large body of dramatists and of spectators. The lack of a central purpose, however, told heavily on the fortunes of the stage. Few playwrights seemed to know their own aims, and the majority compromised by observing the unities, filling their plays with pathos, and adding a seasoning of heroic ardour and of Shakespearian reminiscence. The result, as might be imagined, is a mass of uninteresting dramas unrelieved by any true features or marks of genius.

It was not for want of courage or for want of patience that the pseudo-classicists failed to reform entirely the tastes of their age. Again and again they returned to the attack, but few were successful in their endeavours. In the early years of the century Dennis and Gildon made serious attempts to enlist favour on their side, and failed; so did Dr. Johnson in his *Irene* (1749), and managed to secure some small applause for his effort only through the good services of his erstwhile pupil, David Garrick. Barely three or four of these dramas were popular, and all lack true interest and tragic fervour. The first which definitely established itself upon the stage was *The Distrest Mother* (1712), written by Ambrose Philips, Pope's rival in pastoral poetry. This play was an adaptation from Racine, and contains not only some striking lines, but also two well-drawn characters. It is, however, an alien growth; nothing of Elizabethan fire breathes in it, and the chill which enwraps its dialogue owes its misplaced dignity to France.



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The year following the appearance of *The Distrest Mother* Joseph Addison, already placed in his niche of fame, brought out at Drury Lane his famous *Cato,* a play which was at once accepted as a masterpiece by his friends and pseudo-classic followers. Its initial success was due partly to political enthusiasm, but its own merits established it as a stock play. We may confess that the enthusiasm meted out to *Cato* was not ill placed. If any pseudo-classic tragedy deserved the title of great, certainly *Cato* deserved it. What could be done in this style Addison has done; and our only legitimate criticism may be directed to the limitations of the style. Instead of foolishly making a love theme the centre of an intellectual drama, as so many of his predecessors had done, Addison boldly took as his hero the philosopher Cato, endeavouring to display through an intellectual medium the working of his mind. Love he flung in as a kind of bait to the public, but kept scenes of this nature in the background. In doing so he pointed to the great defect of the tragedy of its time. No play to his age had seemed permissible which did not keep a loving hero and a faithful heroine always in the midst of the action, and the follies resultant upon an unimpassioned treatment of would-be majestic passion brought almost all these plays down to the level of the ridiculous. Addison alone dared to come forward with a theme eminently suited to the restricted medium in which he worked.

Many followed the author of *The Spectator* in choosing subject-matter from classical legend or history, but few realized the reason of his success. All filled their dramas with love, introducing weeping Andromaches and dismal Hecubas. In the middle of the century it seemed for a moment as if this style was to receive a fresh impetus when James Thomson, author of *The Seasons,* turned to the tragic stage. His *Sophonisba* appeared in 1730, and was followed by *Agamemnon* (1738), *Edward and Eleanora* (printed 1739), *Tancred and Sigismunda* (1745), and *Coriolanus* (1749). Three of these plays, it will be noted, had classical themes, and all three are treated in the pseudo-classic manner. In the first Thomson, probably

realizing, as Addison did, the requirements of his style, turned Sophonisba from a lover into a patriot. Her associations with her adorers are dominated entirely by her desire to benefit her native land, and there is as a consequence decidedly less of the amatory sentiment than in other plays of the time. *Agamemnon* follows a similar plan, and achieves a certain dignity from the portrait of the title-*rôle*. *Coriolanus* is less interesting, and displays lamentably Thomson's weakness when contrasted with the majestic passion of Shakespeare. The two romantically themed plays call now for our attention. Both are dealt with in the ordinary pseudo-classic manner, but both treat of subjects which are startlingly different from the typical themes of other classical plays. It is possible here that we can trace the dissatisfaction of the poet at his own chosen *métier*. The author of *The Seasons* is now acclaimed as one of the forerunners of the romantic movement, and here in the theatre he shows himself, if half-heartedly, animated by themes taken from the dim 'Gothic' Middle Ages.

After the middle of the eighteenth century the pseudo-classic tragedy dragged along miserably enough. No one masterpiece of this style during those years may be discovered, and soon the type was to be overwhelmed by the onrush of spectacular melodrama more suited, because of its flagrant rant, to the tastes of a people already feeling that stirring of revolutionary sentiment which produced here a Wordsworth and a Shelley, and in France a Robespierre and a Napoleon.

With the pseudo-classic tragedy, however, moved the heroic and pathetic types. Heroism dominated a great part of the ordinary tragic fare of the period. Even Gildon, pseudo-classicist as he was, could strive to emulate Dryden in his most bombastic flights. No one, on the other hand, wrote a really good heroic play in this period. Dr Joseph Trapp's *Abra-Mule: Or, Love and Empire* (1704) perhaps deserves some praise, but the characters are hopelessly stereotyped, and the language rarely rises above mediocrity. Benjamin Martyn's *Timoleon* (1730) has likewise a certain strength, and David Mallet's *Eurydice* (1731) and *Mustapha*

(1739) merit some praise for occasional scenes. The type is common, but because of its uninspired character cannot be given here anything but a passing mention. It were mere waste of space in a book of this kind to attempt an analysis of plays which were, after all, merely ephemeral and which now can charm no more.

The pathetic school, on the contrary, has a certain interest, in that there were several dramatists who succeeded in producing plays which, if not for all time, have yet a decided strength and an occasional beauty. To this school belongs Nicholas Rowe, the follower of Banks and Otway and the predecessor of George Lillo. Rowe's plays may betray features which link them with the heroic dramas of his own time and earlier; occasionally may be traced in them elements plainly derived from pseudo-classic theory; but fundamentally they belong to the type where pity is what the dramatist most seeks to evoke from the breasts of his hearers. Rowe's very first play, *The Ambitious Step-Mother* (1700; printed 1701), proves the author's predilections. In it Otway is praised and followed, and there is even a bold attempt, in order to secure greater pathos, to throw off the trammels of the pseudo-classic rule of Poetic Justice. This tragedy, which itself is not notable for any great excellence, was followed by *Tamerlane* (1701; printed 1702), a more heroic work, but in his third play, *The Fair Penitent* (1703), he found his true utterance. This tragedy, together with *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (1714) and *The Tragedy of Lady Jane Grey* (1715), fully established Rowe at the head of Augustan dramatists. Each is a 'she-tragedy,' a heroine assuming chief place in the action; each aims at the arousing of pity by means of many pathetic scenes. The style, of course, was not entirely novel. The first of the three plays is derived from Massinger's *The Fatal Dowry,* and already Banks had dealt with English historical themes in a very similar way. To Rowe, however, must be given the credit of having popularized the species. By his skill in contriving pitiful situations, by his gift for writing pleasant if not over-powerful blank verse, by his capable portraiture, he seized upon the minds and hearts of

his contemporaries. His tragedies are not great, lacking as they do a central aim and homogeneity of tone, but they are among the best tragedies written for over fifty or sixty years.

The selection of English historical themes gave an impetus to a species of drama, sometimes with Shakespearian echoes, but based fundamentally upon Otway, in the succeeding years. Mrs Haywood attempted a tragedy on the subject of *Frederick, Duke of Brunswick-Lunenburgh* (1729), and Ambrose Philips wrote *The Briton* (1722) and *Humfrey, Duke of Gloucester* (1723) on early Egnlish themes; so another writer, Captain William Phillips, turned to Irish history in *Hibernia Freed* (1722), and Smollett to Scots history in *The Regicide* (1749). Aaron Hill followed the fashion in *Elfrid: or the Fair Inconstant* (1710) and in *King Henry the Fifth. Or, The Conquest of France by the English* (1723), as did Henry Brooke in *Gustavus Vasa* (1739), William Havard in *King Charles the First* (1737), William Shirley in *Edward the Black Prince: or, The Battle of Poictiers* (1750), and John St John in *Mary Queen of Scots* (1789). It is possible that in choosing these subjects the dramatists were actuated by a number of diverse motives. The age was more patriotic than had been that of the Restoration, and these historical themes fired men's imaginations. The pseudo-classicists, too, had decided that it was better to dramatize actual fact than to attempt the weaving of a fictitious tale, so that in one way the playwrights were placating the critics. Shakespeare, who was now rising into renewed fame, came to be respected for his series of chronicle histories and seemed to unite with Banks and Rowe in favouring the species. Everything conspired to make this a popular type, and audiences liked it because it usually demanded in treatment an amount of bustle and action prohibited to the pseudo-classic muse. Not any of these playwrights were masters in the sphere of tragedy, but each displays certain features which prove that this type aided in keeping alive something of true tragic spirit at a time when the pseudo-classicists were endeavouring by every means in their power to destroy the very being of tragedy.

CHAPTER III

THE BALLAD-OPERA AND PANTOMIME

THE spectacular and operatic tendencies in the Restoration period have already been briefly noted, and a glance has been cast at the development of the Italian opera in the eighteenth century itself. This spectacular and operatic movement may seem somewhat at variance with the chastening influences dealt with summarily in the preceding chapter; but it is to be interpreted as the expression of popular taste moving against the restrictions of the severer among the poets and critics. The men and women of the time obviously liked show; music appealed to them, and dancing. After listening in bored silence to the ceaseless drone of the heavier tragedy they flocked for recreation to the opera, or applauded vigorously the singers, instrumentalists, and dancers who gave *intermezzi* before and after, and occasionally in the midst of, regular performances in the theatres. To appreciate aright the theatrical movements of the age the opera must be intimately related to the chiller forms of tragedy, and out of the two a picture of the period must be wrought.

Four popular species of entertainment must here be noted—the operatic, the spectacular, the terpsichorean, and the mimic. The first two have already been analysed; only the latter two require comment. From the earliest Restoration days (and even in Elizabethan times) dancing formed a popular part of dramatic performances. Many plays ended with a dance, and we know how such a performer as Moll Davis charmed her public. To satisfy the craving for these dances theatrical managers in the late seventeenth century called in the services of dancing-masters from Paris, and these dancing-masters soon became a recognized feature of the theatres. We learn the names of many of them from the newspaper advertisements of the early

eighteenth century, and we note, from the prominence given to them there, what a position they occupied in the minds of the spectators. At first their performances were limited to the ordinary dances of the Court or of the country, but soon came in the taste for mimic dancing, where a story was told silently by means of expressive movements. It is here we reach the beginnings of the pantomime; but the pantomime proper was based, not only on the dance, but on the *commedia dell'arte*. For many seasons during the first half of the eighteenth century French and Italian companies performed in London, drawing to their little theatre fashionable or would-be fashionable crowds. The *répertoires* of these companies consisted of an admixture of classical pieces and of lighter forms of drama. Many of the latter were harlequinades, introducing the recognized characters of the Italian improvised comedy. These characters soon occupied the attention of the audiences, and it is not surprising to find that the managers attempted to counter their rivals by introducing a form of entertainment well calculated to prove attractive. This form of entertainment was the pantomime. In its typical eighteenth-century shape the pantomime presented a union of diverse forces. In the first place, there was usually a serious legendary story told by means of dancing and songs—in fact a short opera on a usual operatic theme. In these plots moved the figures of the *commedia dell'arte,* burlesquing in silent movement the action of the more serious tale. All of this was laid upon a background of the most spectacular description, with the lavish use of 'machinery' and countless changes of scene to please the ravished spectators. It was impossible but that the pantomime, thus wrought out of all the audience held most dear, should prove popular. The two licensed theatres vied with one another in these shows, and soon they drifted to the lesser playhouses at Goodman's Fields and the Haymarket, and settled down comfortably at the various 'Wells.'

These pantomimes did not by any means drive legitimate drama from the stage, for they were, for the most part, performed along with, not instead of, the regular comedies

and tragedies; but they had several serious effects upon the theatrical history of the period. In the first place, they aided in helping forward the disintegration of true dramatic taste; unquestionably they lowered the general power of appreciation on the part of the audience. Secondly, they established fully the reign of the afterpiece. The afterpiece, as we have noted, was inaugurated in England with the appearance of Otway's *The Cheats of Scapin*, and in the first years of the eighteenth century it was fairly common for a tragedy or a comedy to be given along with a one-act farce. Still, the appearance of these farces was only sporadic; they were not rendered necessary appendages to the ordinary plays. With the success of the pantomime, however, the public came to demand some light refreshment when the heavier meal of tragedy or sentimental comedy was over, and, if a pantomime was not shown, some short ballad-opera or farce was positively called for. There seemed nothing extraordinary to the audience in their listening to Lear's agony at 7.30 and laughing hilariously at pantomime or farcical afterpiece at 8. But there was a further result. The pantomime not only aided in the degeneration of taste and in the establishment of the afterpiece, but it led dramatists who might otherwise have contributed serious work to the theatre to indulge in the lesser forms of dramatic endeavour. A one-act farce paid better than a full-length tragedy; the trivial words for an operatic pantomime were well rewarded. Farce, then, comes to occupy the minds of the playwrights, and many men, such as Lewis Theobald, editor of Shakespeare and capable scholar, turned to pen the foolish ditties which pleased the spectators in the pantomimic displays.

The reign of pantomime is ultimately associated with the reign of the ballad-opera, and that there is an intimate relationship between the two has been demonstrated above. In origin the ballad-opera—or ballad-farce, as it was frequently called—was at once a burlesque and a rival of the Italian opera. It was aimed in the first place to capture some of the attention paid to the Italian type, but it employed for effect many satirical attacks upon the

follies that were inherent in that form. Nor would the ballad-opera itself have come into being had not the ground been prepared by the other musical enthusiasts. Men now loved to hear a story sung, and they were delighted when they heard their favourite ditties as well as airs from popular Italian operas provided with new and witty words and all run together into a plot which (being told in English) they could understand and (being comic) they could enjoy.

As is well known, the ballad-opera was invented by John Gay, whose *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) was the first of a long line of similar works stretching down to comparatively recent times. *The Beggar's Opera* at once intrigued the whole of London playgoers. The political references amused those many men and women tired of the chicanery of the Walpole *régime;* the gallant highwayman Macheath, the pathetic Polly, the farcical array of the hero's innumerable wives, the artificiality and fancy and novel daring of it, all ensured it what few innovations receive—an immediate popularity. All the town flocked to the little theatre in which it was performed; it was taken thence to the patent houses and to the booths; travelled from there through all the provinces; and even crept over to the Continent (where its half-concealed revolutionary tone secured it a hearing. Although Gay himself had not previously tried anything in the style of the operatic farce, he had made approaches toward the type in his "tragi-comical farce" *The Mohocks* (printed 1712), a satirical piece, and in the peculiar play entitled *The What D'ye Call It* (1715), a work which approaches the sentimental in some portions and the intellectually satirical in others. The ballad-opera, however, far exceeded these in popularity and was at once imitated by others. Its author, eager, no doubt, to make even more money than had come to him from his first success, hurriedly prepared a sequel in *Polly* (printed 1729). The authorities were by now on the look-out. They had not dared to stifle the successful *Beggar's Opera,* but they saw, or they pretended to see, mighty signs of revolutionary ardour in the sequel. *Polly* was accordingly prohibited the stage, and was performed

for the first time many years later, under Colman's management, in 1777. *Polly* is not nearly so fine as the first piece; it has a realistic touch lacking in the earlier play, which was so purely fanciful and wayward; the savages, too, strike a false note, and, although interesting enough as showing the Rousseauesque tendencies of the writer, aid in spoiling the work as a whole. After this set-back Gay attempted only one other play in the like style, *Achilles* (1733), which departs from the bantering political satire of *The Beggar's Opera* to burlesque a classical story. Its humour is not great, and it proved a failure on the stage.

It is impossible here even to enumerate a moiety of the many ballad-operas produced between 1728 and the middle of the century. One after another they were rushed forward by authors eager to rival Gay in his newly won popularity and affluence, many of them meeting a well-merited fate at the hands of critical audiences. Of all the authors who adopted the style Henry Fielding is the one who calls for most detailed attention. This *littérateur,* anxious to earn money, had produced his first play, *Love in Several Masques* (1728), contemporaneously with Gay's successful opera, and it may have been partly the triumph of that satirical work which led him in 1730 to bring forward his burlesque tragedy *Tom Thumb,* later reworked and renamed *The Tragedy of Tragedies.* This piece follows the lines laid down in *The Rehearsal.* It attacks contemporary tragic follies, endeavouring to display the weakness of invention, the staleness of language, the stereotyped characters which marred the tragedy of the age. Along with *The Rehearsal* and Sheridan's *The Critic* this stands out as one of the best burlesques in English, the styles of the various authors being aptly ridiculed and the wit being in Fielding's finest satirical vein. While it has nothing to do directly with the ballad-opera, it may not be unfitting here to indicate briefly the scope of this burlesque movement in the eighteenth century. Fielding himself, inspired partly by the success of *Tom Thumb,* partly by his own satirical qualities, tried the form several times before the close of his dramatic career. *The Covent-Garden Tragedy*

(1732) is in the same style, as are *Pasquin* (1736), *Tumble-Down Dick: or, Phæton in the Suds* (1736), and *The Historical Register, For the Year 1736* (1737). None of these save *Pasquin* possesses the wit that is apparent in his first burlesque, but each shows Fielding's abundant sense of the follies and evils of his time. The following quotation from the last-mentioned play illustrates well the author's view of those "entertainments" which have occupied our attention immediately above. Sneerwell, the critic, is discussing with Fustian, the tragic poet, the parts of the latter's play. Says Fustian, watching his battle upon the stage:

> There, there, pretty well; I think, Mr *Sneerwell,* we have made a shift to make out a good sort of a Battle at last.
>
> *Sneer.* Indeed I cannot say I ever saw a better.—
>
> *Fust.* You don't seem, Mr *Sneerwell,* to relish this Battle greatly.
>
> *Sneer.* I cannot profess my self the greatest Admirer of this part of Tragedy; and I own my Imagination can better conceive the Idea of a Battle from a skilful Relation of it, than from such a Representation; for my Mind is not able to enlarge the Stage into a vast Plain, nor multiply half a Score into several Thousands.
>
> *Fust.* Oh! your humble Servant; but if we write to please you, and half a dozen others, who will pay the Charges of the House? Sir, if the Audience will be contented with a Battle or two, instead of all the Raree-fine Shows exhibited to them in what they call Entertainments.
>
> *Sneer.* Pray, Mr Fustian, how came they to give the Name of Entertainments to their Pantomimical Farces?
>
> *Fust.* Faith, Sir, out of their peculiar Modesty; intimating that after the Audience have been tired with the dull Works of *Shakespear, Johnson, Vanbrugh,* and others, they are to be entertain'd with one of these *Pantomimes,* of which the Master of the *Play-House,* two or three Painters, and half a Score Dancing-Masters are the Compilers: What these Entertainments are, I need not inform you who have seen 'em; but I have often wond'red how it was possible for any Creature of human Understanding, after having been diverted for three Hours with the Productions of a great Genius, to sit for three more, and see a Set of People running about the Stage after one another, without speaking one Syllable, and playing several Juggling Tricks, which are done at *Fawks's* after a much better manner; and for this, Sir, the Town does not only pay additional Prices, but lose several fine Parts of their best Authors, which are cut to make room for the said Farces.

Sneer. It's very true, and I have heard a hundred say the same thing, who never fail'd being present at them.

Fust. And while that happens they will force any Entertainment upon the Town they please, in spight of its Teeth [*Ghost of Common-Sense rises.*] Oons, and the Devil, Madam! What's the meaning of this? You have left out a Scene; was ever such an Absurdity, as for your Ghost to appear before you are kill'd.

Ghost. I ask Pardon, Sir, in the Hurry of the Battle I forgot to come and kill my self.

Fust. Well, let me wipe the Flower[1] off your Face then; and now if you please Rehearse the Scene; take care you don't make this Mistake any more tho'; for it would inevitably damn the Play, if you should. Go to the Corner of the Scene, and come in as if you had lost the Battle.

Q.C.S.[2] Behold the Ghost of *Common-Sense* appears.

Fust. 'Sdeath, Madam, I tell you you are no Ghost,
You are not kill'd.

Q.C.S. Deserted and forlorn, where shall I fly?
The Battle's lost, and so are all my Friends.

Enter a Poet.

Poet. Madam, not so, still have you one Friend left.

Q.C.S. Why, what art thou?

Poet. Madam, I am a Poet.

Q.C.S. Whoe'er thou art, if thou'rt a Friend to Misery,
Know *Common-Sense* disclaims thee.

Poet. I have been damn'd
Because I was your Foe, and yet I still
Courted your Friendship with my utmost Art.

Q.C.S. Fool, thou wert damn'd because thou didst pretend
Thy self my Friend; for hadst thou boldly dar'd,
Like *Hurlothrombo,*[3] to deny me quite;
Or like an Opera or Pantomime,
Profest the Cause of Ignorance in publick,
Thou might'st have met with thy desir'd Success;
But Men can't bear even a Pretence to Me.

Poet. Then take a Ticket for my Benefit Night.

Q.C.S. I will do more, for *Common-Sense* will stay
Quite from your House, so may you not be damn'd.

Poet. Ha! Say'st thou? By my Soul a better Play
Ne'er came upon a Stage; but since you dare
Contemn me thus, I'll dedicate my Play
To *Ignorance,* and call her *Common-Sense:*
Yes, I will dress her in your Pomp, and swear
That *Ignorance* knows more than all the World.

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[1] flour. [2] Queen Common-Sense.
[3] A fantastic piece by Samuel Johnson of Cheshire.

No better commentary than this could be found on the typical theatrical affairs of the time, for, deeply satirical as it is, it bears behind it the weight of truth.

The burlesque form, partly because of Fielding's own endeavours, proved highly popular in the middle of the eighteenth century, but few of the pieces rise above mediocrity. One of the best of the early examples is Henry Carey's *The Tragedy of Chrononhotonthologos: Being the most Tragical Tragedy, that ever was Tragediz'd by any Company of Tragedians* (1734) with its famous first lines:

SCENE, *An Antichamber in the Palace.*

Enter RIGDUM-FUNNIDOS, *and* ALDIBORONTIPHOSCOPHORNIO.

Rigdum-Funnidos. Aldiborontiphoscophornio!
Where left you *Chrononhotonthologos?*

This, however, is a short piece, and indulges not in witty satire, but in burlesque exaggeration. Much finer is R. B. Sheridan's *The Critic or A Tragedy Rehearsed* (1781), which contains the well-known character of Puff, who has reduced the gentle art of advertisement to regular rule and scientific method. To Sneer, who questions him on the point, he cries:

> O lud, Sir! you are very ignorant, I am afraid.—Yes Sir,—PUFFING is of various sorts—the principal are, The PUFF DIRECT—the PUFF PRELIMINARY—the PUFF COLLATERAL—the PUFF COLLUSIVE, and the PUFF OBLIQUE, or PUFF by IMPLICATION.—These all assume, as circumstances require, the various forms of LETTER TO THE EDITOR—OCCASIONAL ANECDOTE—IMPARTIAL CRITIQUE—OBSERVATION FROM CORRESPONDENT,—or ADVERTISEMENT FROM THE PARTY.
>
> *Sneer.* The puff direct, I can conceive——
>
> *Puff.* O yes, that's simple enough,—for instance—A new Comedy or Farce is to be produced at one of the Theatres (though by the bye they don't bring out half what they ought to do). The author, suppose Mr Smatter, or Mr Dapper—or any particular friend of mine—very well; the day before it is to be performed, I write an account of the manner in which it was received—I have the plot from the author,—and only add—Characters strongly drawn—highly coloured—hand of a master—fund of genuine humour—mine of invention—neat dialogue—attic salt! Then for the performance—Mr DODD was astonishingly great in the character of SIR HARRY! That universal and

judicious actor, Mr PALMER, perhaps never appeared to more advantage than in the COLONEL;—but it is not in the power of language to do justice to Mr KING!—Indeed he more than merited those repeated bursts of applause which he drew from a most brilliant and judicious audience! As to the scenery—The miraculous power of Mr DE LOUTHERBOURG's pencil are universally acknowledged!—In short, we are at a loss which to admire most, —the unrivalled genius of the author, the great attention and liberality of the managers—the wonderful abilities of the painter, or the incredible exertions of all the performers!——

Sneer. That's pretty well indeed, Sir.

Puff. O cool—quite cool—to what I sometimes do.

It may seem that the quotations from these burlesques have been here too liberal, but in them, and only in them, can we get behind the scenes. They record features we miss in the regular tragedies and comedies; they lay bare the evils, and show the virtues, of the time.

This digression on the burlesques of the period has taken us some distance from the ballad-opera; but the two, because of their common satirical tendencies, are ultimately related the one to the other. In its career the ballad-opera frequently adopted a burlesque tone, as in Henry Carey's *The Dragon of Wantley* (1737) and its sequel, *Margery: or, A Worse Plague than the Dragon* (1738). The ballad-operas, indeed, assumed all the forms of regular non-musical drama; there are burlesques among them, and regular farces, now in the Jonsonian manner, now in the style of intrigue, and there are definitely sentimental works calculated to display the humaneness and virtue of mankind. A number of these ballad-operas fully deserve reviving, but the majority are sufficiently trivial, evidently the production of writers eager to run together a work which might bring to their empty pockets a few honest guineas. A few, such as Cibber's *Damon and Phillida* (1729) and John Hippisley's *Flora* (1729), proved successful, but none until the appearance of Sheridan's *The Duenna* (1775) rivalled the popularity of Gay's triumph of 1728. *The Duenna,* certainly, from the literary point of view, well deserved its success. The characters are well drawn, especially that of Isaac; the airs are pretty and sometimes distinguished by true

lyric melody; the dialogue rarely falls to dullness and frequently rises to flashes of true wit.

This play of Sheridan's in reality introduces us to a new type of dramatic art, the comic opera,[1] a type fully established by Isaac Bickerstaff, who won a marked success in *The Maid of the Mill* (1765) and in *Lionel and Clarissa* (1768). The comic opera, particularly that which displayed romantic features, was an important factor in the development of early nineteenth-century literature. It was given new life in the delightful fantasies of Gilbert and Sullivan and still makes its appeal to the adherents of at least one great London theatre.

[1] There is, technically, a distinction between the ballad-opera (with words written to older airs) and the comic opera (with words composed by an individual musician).

CHAPTER IV

THE DECAY OF TRUE COMEDY AND THE GROWTH OF SENTIMENTALISM

The Sentimental Movement

IN dealing with tragedy it was noted that the chief weakness of the age lay in a want of a true orientation. Many dramatists had genuine talent for the stage, but they possessed no definite and conscious purpose in their art. The same precisely may be said for comedy. The manners type, which had produced Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve, was rapidly degenerating when Farquhar and Vanbrugh took it over. A few other dramatists, such as Charles Burnaby and Mrs Centlivre, tried to keep it alive; but it had lost its original abandon and could never again assume quite the same Cavalier tone it had exhibited in the Restoration age.

Farce was occupying more and more attention; sentimentalism was rapidly growing in strength; pity was creeping into the world of intellectual laughter. It is necessary here, for an understanding of the tendencies of the time, to analyse if but briefly the development of this sentimental movement. Sentiment, as Charlotte Brontë found in *Shirley,* means only thought, idea, or conception; in itself, therefore, sentimentalism is not a quality to be despised; but it is imperative that a distinction should be made between the true and false species of this mood. In its weaker form sentimentalism implies an unmanly pity, a lack of strength, and sometimes a certain puritanical hypocrisy. In these forms it is displayed clearly enough in Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* and in Richardson's *Pamela.* But sentimentalism can mean, and did mean, more than this. Steele's hatred of duelling and his belief in matrimonial fidelity were sentimental, but they implied true courage. It was daring for a man in his position, in

the midst of a sneering society, to utter the thoughts he did. Rousseau too is sentimental, but with him sentimentalism denotes humanitarianism, and sometimes revolutionary aims. We may, perhaps, distinguish these three as the main forms of this strange eighteenth-century development. False sentimentalism may be seen in many mawkish works of the time; true sentimentalism implying thought and reflection is well displayed in Steele; the humanitarian sentimentalism, which is a later growth, is reflected in the plays of Mrs Inchbald.

In many different ways sentimentalism exercised an influence, both good and evil, on the comedy of the time. If, on the one hand, it destroyed the possibility of free laughter, untrammelled by any considerations save its own mirth, it opened up fresh tracts for the playwrights, and gave birth to an entirely new type of dramatic work. We may thus regret that there could never appear another Etherege or another Congreve blissfully ignorant of any moral obligations, but we must at the same time recognize that the new humanitarianism, the recognition of social problems, the endeavour to make the theatre express in its own way the many problems which faced men and women, was a good thing, a development which lay at the back of all the best modern dramatic art. It is useless to extol sentimentalism for what it was not, to refuse to see in it often the elements of a false hypocrisy; but it is equally useless to condemn it wholeheartedly as do some who see the theatre only in the light of the comedy of manners.

This sentimental movement may be traced back to the early eighties of the seventeenth century. It is probable that the political interest which centred round the last days of Charles II, the reign of James II, and the Rebellion had something to do with its appearance in the dramatic literature of the time. Men in those years began to think of the problems of government and of religion, and from those they were led naturally to a consideration of the problems of social life. This consideration of life's problems coincided with the development of a reaction to the excesses

of the Stuart Court, and together the two forces moved forward rapidly. Touches of a reflective cast crept into comedies and tragedies; men such as D'Urfey, women such as Mrs Behn, began to introduce into their plays themes which displayed their consciousness of the difficulties that arose out of social conventions. Even Shadwell, a confirmed Jonsonian, felt the impress of the time and gave expression to it in his later productions. Interesting as it is, however, to trace the gradual emergence of this sentimental spirit in the comedy of the late seventeenth century we must recognize that during this period it was purely tentative and experimental. Sufficient strength it had, certainly, to lead Colley Cibber, a dramatist always eager to satisfy popular tastes, to write his *Love's Last Shift* (1696), but it produced no single play of a definitely sentimental cast. *Love's Last Shift* by many has been taken as the starting-point of the sentimental movement; it is merely the first play written consciously to express a feeling which subconsciously had been present in the theatre for more than a decade previously. This comedy marks the beginning of a long series of similar dramas to which may be given the title 'moral-immoral.' It displays, that is to say, the ordinary licentious comic characters and themes of the day with a would-be moral ending in which rapid conversions are attributed to those who had been in the earlier acts presented as sinners. Nothing shows better the hypocritical veneer which spreads over the age. The reformers were satisfied because virtue triumphed in the end; the pleasure-loving spectators were willing to witness the wholly artificial conversions for the sake of the careless intrigue and loose dialogue of the preceding scenes.

If Cibber was the first to produce a play deliberately designed to catch the temper of the age, he was not by any means the chief or the most sentimentally inclined of the early eighteenth-century dramatists. Indeed, in his own way he aided in keeping alive something of the spirit of the manners school in his 'genteel' comedies, works which by their artificiality well reflected the social life of the

Anne era. *She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not* (1702; printed 1703), *The Double Gallant, or, The Sick Lady's Cure* (1707), *The Lady's Last Stake, or, The Wife's Resentment* (1707; printed 1708), and *The Refusal; or, The Ladies Philosophy* (1721), with their affected, vain ladies and their foppish gallants, mirror perfectly a section of this society. Wit of the Congreve sort no longer breathes in these. There is nothing of that rich play of fancy which marks out the latter's works. Instead, we are presented with all the fashionable follies, all the darling vices, of the town. Men and women in those plays no longer hold the same positions they held in Restoration days. Then, the men, if trivially gallant, had at least the gift of intellectual power, and the women were possessed of qualities akin to those of their male companions. Intrigue governed the lives of both, but men and women entered into these intrigues with an equal zest and on equal terms. In the genteel comedies, on the other hand, the men were mere beaux intent not on a satire, a lampoon, a witty jest, but on wigs and shoes and ribbons; their haunt was not the meeting-place of the wits, but the gambling saloons. The women too had degenerated. Their minds were more centred upon trivialities, and they had lost their intellectual power. They had become the playthings of men, to be ridiculed, cheated, and satirized. The women of the Restoration period may have fallen in love with the licentious gallants, but it was with open eyes; now we are approaching the period of the Lovelaces and the Clarissa Harlowes.

The genteel comedy endured all through the eighteenth century, but rapidly it became merged in the sentimental type, so that one of the most typical of Augustan comic forms is that species of drama wherein certain scenes recall the atmosphere of these Cibberian works, and other scenes revel in the expression of the most fulsomely sentimental reflections.

The sentimental movement in the early eighteenth century received its most pronounced impetus from the activities of Sir Richard Steele, author of *The Christian Hero* and joint author of *The Spectator*. Steele's predilections,

in spite of his own somewhat careless life, were all on the side of morality. He believed in domestic happiness, he believed in faithful love, he believed in the goodness of the human heart. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that in his four comedies—*The Funeral; Or, Grief A-la-mode* (1701; printed 1702), *The Lying Lover: or, The Ladies Friendship* (1703; printed 1704), *The Tender Husband: Or, The Accomplish'd Fools* (1705), and *The Conscious Lovers* (1722; printed 1723)—he should have endeavoured to give utterance to his own genuinely sincere reflections upon life. The first of these plays shows his hatred of hypocrisy and his belief in sterling emotion as expressed in the characters of Lady Harriot and of the honest old servant Trusty. *The Lying Lover* penetrates even more deeply into the realm of emotion and of serious reflection. The author's hatred of duelling is fully exemplified in the gaol-scene, when Young Bookwit lies in imminent fear of execution and in contriteness of heart. The question of domestic virtue occupies his mind in *The Tender Husband,* a play which inculcates that honourable love which was one of Steele's chief delights. Excellent as these comedies are, Steele's triumph lies in his last play, in the plot of which he has endeavoured to express his innermost feelings. The hero, Bevil junior, is here presented as about to be married to Lucinda, the daughter of Sealand. He has, however, met and befriended an unknown girl named Indiana, with whom he ultimately falls in love. Unlike the rakes of earlier times he will not endeavour to betray this girl, nor will he marry her without his father's consent. For a time it almost seems as if the play is to end unhappily, until Sealand discovers in Indiana his own daughter. The artificiality of the conclusion may perhaps call forth from modern readers a superior smile, but no superior smiling can lessen the genuine worth of Steele's comedy. The dialogue is excellent, the characters are well drawn, and the situations cleverly managed; and how far Steele has succeeded in drawing comedy from the realms of Restoration licence may be realized even by a cursory glance at one or two of the scenes. This play is

hardly a comedy; it approaches the sphere of the *drame*, that intermediate land where emotions seem to move midway between tragic intensity and comic abandon.

For some years the sentimental style developed but slowly. Sentimentalism, it is true, coloured many an otherwise unsentimental production, but no one for a time succeeded in penning a truly great work of this type. In 1705 Mrs Centlivre produced *The Gamester*, a well-written comedy designed to ridicule the fashionable evils of the gaming-tables, and Taverner in 1717 brought forward *The Artful Wife*, a comedy full of moral reflections planned according to the best sentimental recipes; but these, after all, are not great plays and introduce little that is new. Shortly after 1730, however, two developments are noticeable, each of which was to exercise definite influence on the fortunes of the type in the later years of the century. The first of these tendencies was heralded by one John Kelly in *The Married Philosopher* (1732). This drama has the merit of being the first adaptation in English of a French sentimental work. The importance that attaches to this innovation can be realized only by a glance at the development of the French theatre in the first three decades of the century. Sentimentalism, in its initial stages, was almost entirely an English development. It arose in the midst of Restoration licence and flourished quite independently of Continental example. A change, however, was coming over France as well, a change which three-quarters of a century later was to result in the fury of the Revolution. That change ultimately was inspired by English example. Tentatively the French playwrights started by adapting works which had first seen the light on the London stage. Apologetically they tried their first experiments, until, grown bolder, they triumphantly flared forth their fanfare of literary revolt. That revolt took the form of an extreme type of sentimentalism. There was little of hypocrisy here, none of that crude admixture of licence and moral reflection which distinguished so many English comedies of the time. The Parisian sentimentalists determined from the start to give to mankind their beliefs in the inherent

goodness of the human soul, in the corrupting ways of society, in the virtue of primitive emotions. Many lesser matters they touched on, such as the evils of war and the oppressions of the poor, but those were their fundamental tenets. It is evident that here we possess the Steele type of sentimentalism carried to still further extremes, and it is equally evident that there is here the literary counterpart of those political aspirations which led ultimately to the downfall of the *ancien régime*. For the study of the English theatre this development of serious comedy in France is especially important, for the Continental sentimental drama, nourished as it had been on English example, was freely brought back to London in the middle of the eighteenth century, giving rise to a more pronounced sentimental note in our own theatre. Kelly's work is the herald of that return.

From this rough sketch of the growth of the French *drame* in the eighteenth century, necessarily brief and limned only in general outline, it is clear that direct revolutionary ideas must develop from the cardinal tenets mentioned as belonging to the dramatists. This revolutionary mood finds its echo, too, in the English theatre, becoming first noticeable a few years after the appearance of Kelly's *The Married Philosopher* in Robert Dodsley's *The King and the Miller of Mansfield* (1737), a little playlet which strives to show the inherent community between the sentiments of king and subject, and endeavours to read into its few scenes a definite moral precept. Never so powerful a force in London as it was in Paris, because of the greater liberty and lack of tyranny here, this revolutionary note is also a marked feature of later sentimental endeavour.

It might have been expected that after the thirties of the eighteenth century sentimentalism, thus possessed of inspiration and a definite purpose, would have produced some masterpieces of serious comedy. The actual results, on the contrary, were poor. If sentimentalism brought something new to the theatre it at the same time proved fatally easy of execution. Playwrights found that the

calling forth of emotional scenes required no great exertions, and the coining of reflective sentences for their characters was simple enough. The style, too, led men away from realism. In order to paint, as they thought, more truly the humane qualities of mankind they had recourse to the ideal. They painted not the men and women they saw round them, but abstractions conceived in their own minds. The keen observations and realistic touches which had always brightened earlier comedy began, therefore, to disappear, and vapid, colourless, uninteresting productions were the result. Sentimentalism, too, allied to the genteel comedy, brought about a peculiar convention. In the end it cut out of the theatre all kinds of 'low' characters. A noble savage once or twice might be permitted entrance into the drawing-room, but artisans and the world of labour were studiously shunned. The sentimental drama became pre-eminently the drama of middle- and upper-class society, with conversations and scenery to match.

Many authors after 1750 took to writing these popular works, but none devoted their energies with such unflagging zeal to the cause of the sentimental muse as did Hugh Kelly and Richard Cumberland, contemporaries and companions of Oliver Goldsmith. The first of these two men won a prodigious success with his *False Delicacy* (1768), a comedy eagerly read as well as eagerly followed upon the stage, and repeated that success with his *School for Wives* (1773). *A Word to the Wise* (1770), an equally sentimental play, was unsuccessful because of political prejudice. *False Delicacy* is a play of sentimental refinement which keeps three pairs of unsuited lovers in a constant state of mental and emotional disturbance. Into this theme of conflicting feelings Kelly infuses a mass of reflective sentences all calculated to further the cause of the highest morality. Moments of laughter there are, but rare and fitful in their appearance, by no means calculated to rival the attractions of the sentimental portion. From the purely literary point of view *A Word to the Wise* is the better play, although its historical importance is much slighter. Here Sir John Dormer desires his daughter to

marry Sir George Hastings, a fop. Her heart is given to Villars, the sentimental hero and long-lost son of Willoughby. In her distress the heroine confides in Sir George, and he, though foppish, is sufficiently sympathetic to break off the match, and all ends happily. That Kelly felt at times the ridiculousness of the type he patronized seems proved by Miss Dormer's remark in the first act, "Upon my word, Harriot, a very florid winding up of a period, and very proper for an elevated thought in a sentimental comedy." As with the dramatists of the heroic tragedy, there seems to have been a consciousness among these 'feeling' authors that they were attempting a form of literature capable of vast absurdities.

Richard Cumberland continued the same style with even greater enthusiasm. His famous work *The West Indian* (1771) won for him immense repute, and the sentimental atmosphere he reproduced in *The Fashionable Lover* (1772), *The Jew* (1794), *The Wheel of Fortune* (1795), and a multitude of other pieces in which the characters are all cast in the same mould, uninformed by realistic qualities. The first of these introduces a hero well beloved by those of Cumberland's kin, the slightly rakish youth with a benevolent heart. This gentleman is presented to us as attempting to seduce Louisa Dudley, but, after a series of conflicting purposes and exciting scenes, he marries her, to find that she is by way of being an heiress. The situations are not unskilfully woven together, but it is perfectly plain to even the most ignorant reader that the whole plot of the work is impossible and that the characters act and speak as no living characters would have done. *The Jew* exhibits much the same features. No one of sense will here quarrel with Cumberland's aim, which is sympathetic and humane, but impossible goodness and artificiality mar the whole.

Kelly and Cumberland, as we have seen, by no means stood alone, and other writers perhaps succeeded in writing better, if less popular, plays than any of theirs. Thus as early as 1748 Edward Moore produced an excellently planned comedy in *The Foundling,* a work designed to "steal the pitying Tear from Beauty's Eye" and dealing

with a theme (that of unknown parentage) beloved by the sentimentalists from the time of Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* to that of Cumberland's *The West Indian*. A son sympathetically searching for his father, or a maiden cast parentless upon the world, was sure to call forth that pitying tear in the eighteenth century, even although it can only provoke an incredulous smile in our own. So, too, at a slightly later date Thomas Holcroft ably carried on the tradition. His best-known play, long a stock piece on the stage, was *The Road to Ruin* (1792), but his revolutionary and sentimental proclivities are enshrined in well over a score of dramas. In this 'comedy' we are introduced to a hero in Harry Dornton, who has ruined himself by gambling. Riotous as he is, however, he has a feeling heart, and is cast into despair when he hears that his follies are about to bring ruin on his father. In order to expiate his crimes he proposes to marry Mrs Warren, a rich old widow. In the end, of course, all comes right, with due rewards and punishments. Here again we are introduced to the benevolent libertine, and the revolutionary note which Holcroft would dearly have loved to weave into the play is well brought out in the prologue. The actor who enters to introduce the comedy pretends that the author's original verses have been lost, and proposes to extemporize:

> The author had mounted on the stilts of oratory and elocution:
> Not but he had a smart touch or two, about Poland, France, and the—the revolution;
> Telling us that Frenchmen, and Polishmen, and every man is our brother:
> And that all men, ay, even poor negro men, have a right to be free; one as well as another!
> Freedom at length, said he, like a torrent is spreading and swelling,
> To sweep away pride and reach the most miserable dwelling:
> To ease, happiness, art, science, wit, and genius to give birth;
> Ay, to fertilize a world, and renovate old earth!

By Holcroft's time, of course, the Continental influence had reached its height. Probably his are the translations from Brandes and from Bouilly, entitled respectively *The German Hotel* (1790) and *Deaf and Dumb, or, The Orphan*

Protected (1801). In the first we are treated to a thoroughly melodramatic story, with a villainous Baron Thorck, a sympathetic Dorville, and a distressed heroine. The second is even more serious in tone. The scene is laid in France. In Paris the evil Darlemont has purposely lost the child Count Julio. The latter is befriended by the good old Abbé de l'Épée, who brings him to Toulouse. There they tell the story to Franval, sister of Mariamne, whom St Almes, Darlemont's son, loves. The truth becomes apparent, and Darlemont dies, leaving happiness to the true of heart.

(ii) The Older Tradition in Goldsmith and Sheridan

It is evident here that comedy has departed far from its original home. In place of laughter, tears; in place of intrigue, melodramatic and distressing situations; in place of rogues and gallants and witty damsels, pathetic heroines and serious lovers and honest servants—this is what we discover in the typical sentimental drama of the late eighteenth century. We are in the world of the *drame,* not of comedy; in the realm of the emotions, not of the intellect. It must not be supposed, of course, that sentimentalism completely dominated the age. Farce still retained its power, and there were many attempts to awake the muse of laughter. Many saw the follies of the sentimental kind. Whitehead gave expression satirically to a common thought when in *A Trip to Scotland* (1770) he makes Sotherton declare that "the good company will perceive, that whatever effect the late run of sentimental comedies may have had upon their audiences, they have at least made the players men of honour"; and Cobb has a characteristic passage in *The First Floor* (1787):

> *Young Whimsey.* Hey-day! what's become of the exquisite luxury of a feeling mind in relieving distress?
>
> *Furnish.* It may do very well for people of fortune, but a tradesman [*sic*] shou'd never indulge in luxury.
>
> *Young Whimsey.* Consider, generosity is part of the business of man.
>
> *Furnish.* And a d——d losing trade it is—therefore it shan't be a part of *my* business.

It is worthy of note that according to *The Theatrical Dictionary* this work met with "great applause."

Sheridan and Goldsmith were, of course, the leaders of the anti-sentimental movement, but they had been preceded by many dramatists who kept to the older paths. Samuel Foote, a prolific writer of the third quarter of the century, thus poured forth a series of more or less farcical pieces packed with personal satire. *The Knights* (1749) is of this type, as is *The Orators* (1762); less of satire but more of farcical wit appear in *The Minor* (1760) and in *The Maid of Bath* (1771), although the former contains a direct attack upon the Methodists, and the latter introduces a portrait of Miss Linley, later to be the wife of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Foote's work was varied in style, but in all his plays the same qualities of satire and farcical wit appear. We cannot accord to them the title of true comedies, but in them is preserved something of the older style of comic composition.

Various other dramatists supplied the theatre with similar fare during Foote's lifetime. George Colman, generally known as 'the Elder' to distinguish him from his son, George Colman the Younger, was one of the most vigorous of those who supported the cause of laughter and opposed sentimental pity. *Polly Honeycombe* (1760) is a clever satire of contemporary follies, and, as has often been pointed out, anticipates not only in general style but in definite phrases Sheridan's more polished satire in *The Rivals*. Colman's opposition to the sentimental vein is seen clearly enough in his selection of *Tom Jones* for the theme of his next work, *The Jealous Wife* (1761). This comedy is strictly in the style of the Restoration masters, although there is not in it the sparkling wit or delicate touch of the Congreve pen. Nevertheless, the dialogue is capably written, and Colman deserves unstinted praise for his able treatment of his subject-matter. Lord Ogleby in *The Clandestine Marriage* (1766) is another echo of Restoration days. Fops in Colman's time had not been common, and if they appeared occasionally they were vapid and uninteresting. Lord Ogleby, however, is in the best style

of the older comedy, and the presentation of his character well qualified Colman for a place among the true masters of comic portraiture. More numerous touches of a sentimental character appear in Arthur Murphy's plays, but his two comedies *The Way to Keep Him* (1760) and *All in the Wrong* (1761) retain something of true comic atmosphere, and many of his lighter pieces belong to the farcical and satiric strain. Later, too, Mrs Hannah Cowley, author of nearly a score of comedies, farces, and tragedies, strove to keep alive the earlier spirit. *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* (1783) is probably her best-known play, but *A School for Greybeards* (1786) and *The Town Before You* (1794) perhaps possesses more of the true *vis comica.* The second of these plays belongs to the Spanish intrigue school and goes back for inspiration to Mrs Behn and Mrs Centlivre. Slight as the vulgarity of this piece seems when compared with the comedies of Mrs Cowley's predecessors, it was nearly damned for its indecency and only won through because of its *verve.* The plot is a hackneyed one in which Don Gaspar is destined to marry Antonia, who in her turn loves the banished Don Henry. The lover, by disguising himself, manages to insinuate himself into Don Gaspar's house. A sub-plot deals with the gay Seraphnia, wife of Don Alexis, who accepts the attentions of Octavio in order that her stepdaughter Viola may escape with her lover, Don Sebastian.

These comedies, which are merely a few chosen out of a vast number of similar pieces, show well that even the force of revolutionary French sentimentalism could not completely banish true laughter from the stage. Nearly all of these have been long forgotten because of Goldsmith's and Sheridan's greatness, but many deserve to be remembered for their own intrinsic merits, and some of them gave suggestions to those two writers for their more famous works. Oliver Goldsmith first took up the cudgels against the sentimentally genteel comedy in 1759, when he himself was thirty-one years of age, in his essay on *The Present State of Polite Learning,* and a decade later, in 1768, dared to bring forward his comedy *The Good Natur'd Man* as an attack upon the style of Kelly, Cumberland,

and their kin. The audience realized fully the cleverness of the work, although their tastes were too hardened to permit them to accept without protest the 'low' scenes which Goldsmith had introduced into his play. Reading the play now, we may perhaps fail to discern wherein exactly Goldsmith departed from the sentimental camp. The concluding lines seem cast entirely in the spirit of the Cumberland style:

Honeywood. Heavens! how can I have deserved all this? How express my happiness, my gratitude! A moment, like this, overpays an age of apprehension.

Croaker. Well, now I see content in every face; but Heaven send we be all better this day three months.

Sir William. Henceforth, nephew, learn to respect yourself. He who seeks only for applause from without, has all his happiness in another's keeping.

Honeywood. Yes, Sir, I now too plainly perceive my errors. My vanity, in attempting to please all, by fearing to offend any. My meanness in approving folly, lest fools should disapprove. Henceforth, therefore, it shall be my study to reserve my pity for real distress; my friendship for true merit, and my love for her, who first taught me what it is to be happy.

Certainly this shows that Goldsmith had not completely thrown over the shackles of the style he condemned, and similar passages may be found scattered throughout the play. It is when we come to the bailiff scenes in the third act that we begin to see Goldsmith's sly satire of the genteel style. Says the minion of the law:

Looky, Sir, I have arrested as good men as you in my time: no disparagement of you neither. Men that would go forty guineas on a game of cribbage. I challenge the town to shew a man in more genteeler practice than myself. . . . I love to see a gentleman with a tender heart. I don't know, but I think I have a tender heart myself. If all that I have lost by my heart was put together, it would make a—but no matter for that. . . . Humanity, Sir, is a jewel. It's better than gold. I love humanity. People may say, that we, in our way, have no humanity; but I'll shew you my humanity this moment. There's my follower here, little Flanigan, with a wife and four children, a guinea or two would be more to him, than twice as much to another. Now, as I can't shew him any humanity myself, I must beg leave you'll do it for me. . . . Sir, you're a gentleman. I see you know what to do with your money.

It is small wonder that an eighteenth-century audience which prided itself in its gentility and in its humane sentiments should have objected to this caricature of its dearest qualities.

The Good-natured Man, however, is not really a great play. There are many weaknesses in the plot, much of the dialogue is stilted, and there are scenes wherein the author showed that he had not grasped fully the requirements of the stage. All these deficiencies are remedied in his greater work *She Stoops to Conquer, or The Mistakes of a Night* (1773). This comedy, of richly deserved fame, betrays a peculiar fusion of forces. It is not a true comedy of manners, yet it clearly owes part of its inspiration to that school of which Farquhar was one of the last true representatives. In atmosphere it approaches more closely to Shakespeare's romantic comedy, which, it may be noted, after about 1735, had rapidly come into an esteem which it had not enjoyed since the early seventeenth century. There breathes over the play an atmosphere of romantic sentiment—not the sentimentalism of Goldsmith's contemporaries, but a peculiar union of intellect and emotion which colours the figures and words of Hardcastle and of Tony Lumpkin and of Diggory alike. This humour Goldsmith unquestionably owes to his Irish parentage and upbringing. There is the sly smile, the concealed wit, the emotional and sincere kindness which marks out the comedies of Shakespeare as well as the lesser works of many nineteenth-century Scots and Irish novelists. Tony Lumpkin himself is of the kin of Falstaff. He is a fool and yet a wit; his follies make us laugh at him, but his clever tricks cause him to be the source of laughter in other men. For once, in the eighteenth century, the spirit of *Twelfth Night* was revived.

Entirely different in character and in aim, save for a common objection to the sentimental style, Richard Brinsley Sheridan continued Goldsmith's work. His plays date from 1775, the year which saw the production of *The Rivals,* to the end of the eighteenth century, when his adaptation of Kotzebue's drama *Pizarro* won him enormous

popularity. Within those years Sheridan's activity was constant. The ballad-opera entitled *The Duenna* (1775) has already been noted above, but this takes second place to *The School for Scandal* (1777), *The Critic; or A Tragedy Rehearsed* (1779; printed 1781), and even *A Trip to Scarborough* (1777; printed 1781). None of these in any way resembles Goldsmith's plays. *The Rivals* presents, not an admixture of Shakespearian humour with features of the school of manners, but the very atmosphere of Congreve modified by exaggerated humours of the Jonsonian type. The names of the characters are mostly of the humours sort—Sir Lucius O'Trigger, Sir Anthony Absolute, and Lydia Languish may be taken as examples—and the exaggeration of special traits is well shown in the notorious Mrs. Malaprop. In the main this comedy presents a direct challenge to the sentimentalists, although in the Julia and Faulkland portions there are evident features of the Cumberland style. Lydia's love of a romantic elopement, however, and her fantastic notions of a lover's duties are clearly modelled as satires on the yet popular style. *The Rivals,* as a whole, is a somewhat disappointing play. Some scenes in it are so excellent that we notice all the more clearly the weaknesses in the whole plan. Sentimental motives clash with elements taken from the Congreve school; Jonsonian exaggeration conflicts heavily with the play of wit and fancy. About the whole play, too, breathes an atmosphere of farce, and although there is something of farce in every great comedy this lower strain tends to weaken the general effect of Sheridan's work.

The School for Scandal is a more homogeneous work of art. Nothing truly disturbs the constant glitter of its wit, and the situations are never exaggerated or bizarre; rather do they stand forward as among the most perfect in the English theatre. No single scene possibly has won so much fame as the screen episode in Act IV of this play. Again there is satire of the sentimental strain in the person of Joseph Surface, but this direct satire is subordinated to the expression of free wit which irradiates all the characters. There is no attempt here to catch the subtle delicacy of

Goldsmith's comedies, no effort to seize upon the inner movements of the human heart, no introduction of kindliness or emotion; all is crystal clear, and that which furnishes the humour of the play is, as in the comedies of Etherege and Congreve, not the traits of mankind, but their social manners.

With *The School for Scandal* we reach the culmination of the anti-sentimental movement. This, as it were, was the last word of the Augustan writers, for sentimentalism is, in its own way, the forerunner of romance. Kelly and Cumberland passed away, but out of their supersensitive style arose the deeper humanitarianism of the revolutionary and romantic periods. The poets of the nineteenth century, full of heroic ardours and serious ideals, were not given to laughter, and the comedy of manners for nearly a century vanished from the world of creative drama.

CHAPTER V

THE DOMESTIC TRAGEDY

WITH the treatment of Goldsmith and Sheridan we have passed into the camp of the anti-sentimentalists. It will now be necessary to return to the beginning of the eighteenth century and the rise of the sentimental school in order to trace a dramatic development intimately connected with that school, which ultimately produced the dramatic form known as the domestic tragedy.

Domestic tragedy, as we have seen, had been known in the early seventeenth century, producing then a distinguished masterpiece in Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness;* but in the progress of romantic tragi-comedy and of the heroic drama this domestic note ceased to be remembered. Playwrights passed to the East for inspiration, and could see no sorrows but those of kings and princely heroes. The pathetic movement, however, marked in the plays of Banks and Otway pointed to a reaction from this style. In *The Orphan* the characters are aristocratic, but not royal; in Banks' plays the heroes and heroines are taken from English history. Thomas Southerne was bold enough to make the central figure of his *Oroonoko* (1696) an ill-used native chief. It is hard to call forth pity for impossible Oriental heroes, and the dramatists saw that in order to achieve their purpose they would have to deal with themes nearer home. Tentatively they began, as has been seen, to treat of English history and of heroes under the rank of princes and emperors. This attempt to deal with humbler themes brought with it a change of style. In the first place, in order to bring the dialogue more into harmony with the subject all the inflated language inherited from the heroic school began to disappear. The conversation became more ordinary, and the blank verse struggled to

emancipate itself into prose. Secondly, with the loss of royal dignity the playwrights endeavoured to throw into their dramas an additional air of terror and awe, and, in doing so, they captured again something of that spirit of fate which is associated with the names of Æschylus and Shakespeare. Actions in these plays were dependent not merely upon the motives of the characters, but upon the workings of some unseen and tremendous cosmic force.

In the eighteenth century itself the first example of this type of 'fatal' drama was *The Rival Brothers* (1704), a tragedy based on *The Orphan;* the first example of a serious play with wholly middle-class English characters followed a few years later in Aaron Hill's *The Fatal Extravagance* (1721), a work which returns for inspiration to the pseudo-Shakespearian *Yorkshire Tragedy.* These plays, and others of a similar nature, laid the basis for the appearance of George Lillo's *The London Merchant; or The History of George Barnwell* (1731), a play which fluttered all London society when it was first produced and remained a stock piece for many years. The influence of the sentimental style is clearly visible in this work. The aim is definitely moral, and serious reflections, often wholly undramatic, appear in almost every scene as they do in the comedies of Kelly and of Cumberland. Notwithstanding this, Lillo's endeavour marks the beginning of a new era of tragic activity in England. Here at last was found one daring enough to make the hero of a tragedy a mere apprentice; here was one who succeeded in calling forth from the breasts of fashionable spectators tears for an ordinary middle-class family. Hardly anyone at the time failed to realize its power. Men of letters praised it. Royalty perused it in palace boudoir. Spectators flocked again and again to see it on the stage. Foreign dramatists, seeing the possibilities of the type, hastened to adapt it and pen other imitations of its style. Unassuming as it appeared to be, *The London Merchant* marked the downfall of the classical tragedy, drove outworn themes from the stage, and established the basis of the modern theatre.

This work Lillo followed with *Fatal Curiosity,* a finely

written tragedy which deals with an ordinary peasant couple led by poverty to commit a terrible crime. The plot is simple but effective, and the atmosphere of fate which Lillo has succeeded in casting into his play proves his true *flair* for the theatre. Like *The London Merchant, Fatal Curiosity* was translated into several languages, and the story gave inspiration in our own time to the youthful Rupert Brooke for his *Lithuania.*

By the time when *Fatal Curiosity* was produced the eighteenth-century audiences had become well accustomed to the novel form of drama which had grown up among them, although the supersensitiveness of sentimentalism would not permit them to witness anything savouring of 'lowness.' They did not call George Barnwell 'low,' but they decided that the Mrs Lupine scenes in Charles Johnson's *Cœlia* (1732) had that quality, and accordingly damned the tragedy. Witnessing the success of Lillo, other dramatists attempted to pen plays of a similar character. Thus John Hewitt came forward with his *Fatal Falsehood: or Distress'd Innocence* (1734) and Thomas Cooke with his peculiarly named play *The Mournful Nuptials, or Love the Cure of all Woes* (printed 1739; acted as *Love the Cause and Cure of Grief, or The Innocent Murderer,* 1743), but these are not great plays. In each are some sparks of genius, but the dialogue in both is dull, and the characters, albeit more interestingly delineated than the characters of pseudo-classic tragedy, lack vitality. Only one author, indeed, rises to true heights in this style. That author is Edward Moore, who in *The Gamester* (1753) produced an affecting and effective domestic tragedy. The story is one of unrelieved misery. Beverley, the hero, rushes into financial ruin through his inordinate passion for gambling. Reduced to his last few coppers, he takes his wife's jewels, and, playing recklessly, loses them. In the meantime, Lewson, the lover of Beverley's sister Charlotte, discovers the evil machinations of the hero's pretended friend Stukely. The latter, realizing that his exposure is imminent, instructs his tool Bates to murder the lover; he is assumed to be dead, and the blame is cast on Beverley, who in his

misery takes poison and dies after hearing that a large sum of money has been left to him. The only gleam of sunshine comes from the discovery that Lewson is still alive and will probably be united to his beloved Charlotte. Moore's triumph rests in his grimly concentrated effect. Save for the slightly developed love between Lewson and Charlotte, hardly anything extraneous is permitted to intrude into the play. A dark air broods over the whole, and the weight of tragic intensity raises *The Gamester* to a level with the best of our *bourgeois* tragedies.

It may appear strange that with this rapid development of middle-class drama in the middle of the eighteenth century the type should not have been favoured by other dramatists in the later decades of the century or in the romantic period proper. Several tendencies, however, operated against its success. In the first place, sentimentalism inclined toward the *drame* rather than tragedy. A genteel audience felt so pleased with itself when after indulging in its best of pitying tears it found the sinner reclaimed and the distressed maiden saved, sympathy rewarded and evil exposed, that the dramatists were loth to destroy their pretty taste. Accordingly *The Road to Ruin* took the place of *The Gamester*. Secondly, the power of appreciating tragic intensity of purpose was rapidly being lost. The heroic drama, the pseudo-classic and the pathetic tragedy, had by degrees weakened the appreciation of the spectators. Show and opera had brought them to desire their tragedies to be dizened out with ample scenic decorations and vitiated with music. Even in *Macbeth* they preferred the witches to be three pretty chorus girls rather than the weird hags that Shakespeare imagined. Thirdly, the romantic poets, who might have done something for this style, were nearly all wrapt up in their idealistic visions of Italy and the East. They looked with contempt upon the squalid slums and vapid suburbs of London, and preferred to write of Spanish castles, of ruined Italian abbeys, of Oriental adventurings. Never could they restrain themselves to come down to the world of ordinary life, to feel ordinary sorrows and appreciate ordinary joys,

to thrill the hearts of their readers not by the glorious rhapsody of inspired imagination, but by simple touches requiring no less genius and skill. After its rapid rise in the eighteenth century the *bourgeois* drama in England died. It was left to French and German playwrights to bring the form to perfection and reintroduce it once more on the London stage.

PART VI

DRAMA IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER I

THE MAIN TENDENCIES OF THE TIME

AFTER the appearance of Sheridan and Goldsmith the drama rapidly decayed. For this several reasons may be brought forward, each of which must be considered in relation to the others. Chief in importance, unquestionably, is that which concerns the size of the playhouses. In 1787 the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden was enlarged, and five years later it was rebuilt; Drury Lane about the same time witnessed a similar transformation. The results were as might have been expected. The profits of those in charge of the theatres were sometimes much larger than before, because of the increased seating accommodation, but the distance of the stage from the pit and galleries rendered subtle acting impossible and forced the performers to indulge in rant and bombast. It is not mere fancy to argue this as one of the main causes of dramatic decay. Contemporaries were unanimous in declaiming against these lofty structures. Mrs Siddons herself, we are told, made her inflections coarser and rougher; the flash of repartee was impossible; the tender whisper or the excited aside were rendered ridiculous by the necessity which lay upon the actor to shout, if his words were to carry to the topmost galleries. Scott and Joanna Baillie, with many others, proclaimed, in the words of the latter, that "the largeness of our two regular theatres, so unfavourable for hearing clearly, has changed in a great measure the character of pieces exhibited within their walls." It is clear that in these theatres anything approaching the comedy of man-

ners would have been impossible, that subtle tragedy would have failed to appeal, that only the roughest and rudest effects could be employed. Hence the rise and popularity of the spectacular play. Never before had scenic artists and machinists had so much to do. All kinds of gorgeous *tableaux* were arranged. The words of the drama mattered little so long as the plot was crudely indicated and plenty of opportunity given to the manager to devise attractive scenes and *ensembles*. So, too, the power of music increased. Choruses which filled with sound the huge spaces of the theatres made great appeal, and melodrama with its songs, its stereotyped characters, its boldly delineated plot, became the form of dramatic literature *par excellence*.

It was probably the size of these theatres which served to intensify the evils of the audience. Society was libertine and vulgar, and the upper-class people set a tone in the playhouses which was aped by the more dissolute among the *bourgeoisie*. From contemporaries we learn of the number of prostitutes who thronged the *foyers*, of the language heard on all sides, of the drunkenness and the countless assignations made in the theatres, of the coarse rioting. Boaden in his *Life of Kemble* (1825) tells a characteristic story. *Coriolanus* was being performed one November evening in the year 1806, Mrs Siddons herself playing the part of Volumnia. "When," says the author, "Mrs Siddons was supplicating as Volumnia, the conqueror, her son, to spare his country; when every eye should have been riveted to the scene, every ear burning with the pure flame of patriot vehemence—at such a moment an apple was thrown upon the stage, and fell between Mrs Siddons and Mr Kemble." Kemble naturally protested vigorously and received a verbal reply "that this apple was thrown at some of the disorderly females in the boxes." Debauchery, fashionable vice, evils of all kinds centred in these houses of amusement, and the saner, soberer people who might have aided toward the elaboration of a finer drama were forced to keep themselves apart.

The size of the theatres, the prevailing show and spectacle

demanded and supplied, and the class of spectators who frequented them naturally led many men who might have devoted their genius to the drama to turn to other forms of literature. Of what use was it to pen plays, to work out with the sweat of the brow some soul-consuming tragedy, when the manager, superciliously superior, condemned it as not affording sufficient opportunities for the exercise of the stage-carpenter's craft? In point of fact, we find in this period an ever-widening gulf between the men of letters and the theatre. Nearly every poet of the time attempted to create something in the medium of drama, but nearly all were repulsed. The consequence was that when some writer of genius decided to pen a play he did so for the reading public—not because he would not have liked to make money out of a theatrical production, but simply because he knew that there could be no hope for him in the playhouse. Never before were there published so many unacted plays. In the eighteenth century we find the booksellers issuing political pamphlets in dramatic form, but the number of unacted regular comedies and tragedies is comparatively small. In the early nineteenth century every year brought forth its regular series of unacted poetic plays. This separation of the poets from the stage led to an intensification of the evils already noted. It divorced the men of genius from the theatre; it prevented them from learning their trade where alone it could be learned—in the playhouse itself. As a result their plays betray a lack of knowledge of stage requirements even beyond their not always sincere declaration that these works were intended only for reading. On the other hand, they left in the service of the theatre only a group of mediocre authors, servile enough to write according to the dictates of a manager himself under the domination of the public. The stage, cut off from the world of literature, gradually grew worse as the years progressed, degenerating rapidly in style and character-delineation.

It may be noted here that perhaps too much can be made of the prevailing lyrical note of the early nineteenth century. It is assuredly true that all the poets of this

time have expressed themselves most perfectly through the medium of lyrical verse, and equally true that the qualities necessary for the production of good lyrical poetry are not by any means such as will produce good drama. At the same time, two points must be noted. The Elizabethan age itself was distinguished as an age of song as well as an age of dramatic creativeness; Shakespeare could express himself not only in *Othello* and *The Tempest,* but also in his sonnets and his songs. Moreover, all these romantic poets of the nineteenth century attempted the dramatic form—attempted it, too, in spite of the rebuffs they received from the managers. From Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Scott to Tennyson and Browning we find this is true; and we may legitimately argue that, had these poets been given the opportunity of producing their works upon the stage, their genius might have seemed to-day less lyrical than it is. They would have learned from the theatre the delineation of character; they would have studied theatrical dialogue; they would not have been so wrapped as they were within their own imaginations. Still another thing held them back, and herein they themselves were to blame. Perhaps, had any one of them given to the theatre a form of dramatic literature entirely new, or a style distinctly suited to contemporary conditions, he would have had a hearing. As it was, all of them kept to the old paths, and to these paths they were kept by the critics. What might have spurred the poets to fresh efforts would have been a criticism which devoted itself to technical details, which studied form and plan and tragic aim, the nature of theatrical dialogue, and the management of plot. This criticism, however, has come only in our own days. In the early nineteenth century Lamb's *Specimens* and Coleridge's *Lectures on Shakespeare* are characteristic of a general trend of critical judgment. The former does not consider plays as plays; he treats them as collections of poetical passages, those passages being capable of detachment from the whole of which they form a part. But a drama is not a collection of poems; it is, or ought to be, an organic whole, the beauty of which is

destroyed as soon as a portion is removed from it, and the charm of whose individual component parts is unintelligible without reference to the others. Coleridge takes a different line of criticism. He is interested in metaphysical disquisitions; he loves to probe into the psychology of Shakespeare's heroes; but no more than Lamb does he deal with the plays as works of dramatic art. For all that he says about them, they might as well have been novels. Nowhere does he attempt to show exactly how Shakespeare subordinated his material to the exigencies of the theatre, wherein he showed himself the greatest dramatic genius of all time. Such criticism as this was more than fatal for men who needed the spur of reality and the bridle of hard technical training to fit them for the task they essayed.

Perhaps other causes may be adduced, but all others must be subordinate to these. We may say, for example, that the strict exercise of the censorship in an age when most young poets were revolutionaries was bound to influence the production of plays, and certainly the office of the censor must be accorded its place among the minor contributory causes of dramatic decline. On the other hand, this cannot have been one of the principal reasons; it merely formed another drop in the mass of water thrown upon the dramatic fire. So, too, we may say that a new reading public had arisen, that the theatre had lost its former appeal, that men and women preferred novels to plays. This, again, is certainly true, but are the playhouses empty to-day during a period of unprecedented fictional activity? Never, say the publishers, have so many novels been printed as now; yet men still love to go to the theatre to witness comedy or tragedy, farce or revue. No other form of literature can quite take the place of the drama; and even Scott's novels, popular as they were, could not have withheld men from the playhouses.

Drama, then, from 1790 onward is seen to divide itself sharply into acted and unacted plays, the former becoming, with the passage of the years, more and more trivial, the latter more and more divorced from theatrical needs. On

both, however, operated the same forces. German romance charmed Scott and Shelley as well as the most negligible of dramatists; medievalism affected both; and sentimentalism, now in the guise of mawkish prudery, now in that of rich humanitarianism, dominated both. The two forms, therefore, do not lie so far apart as may appear at first sight.

CHAPTER II

ROMANTIC SPECTACLE PLAYS AND TRAGEDIES

Tragedy

THE realm of true tragedy in the late years of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century showed a miserable paucity of tragic endeavour. The classical movement still held its own against the forces of romance, but feebly and with constant lapses into conflicting styles. John Delap, who started his career with *Hecuba* in 1761 (printed 1762) and ended it with *Abdalla* in 1803, was one of its most fervent supporters. His first play, taken from Euripides, is a dull, declamatory work of the earlier Augustan style, and formed a fitting prelude to his series of equally declamatory and only less dull plays. Nothing could be hoped for from such as he. Stranger is it that Mrs Cowley, whose witty comedies have been noted above, should have adopted this style in tragedy. Her *Fate of Sparta or The Rival Kings* appeared in 1788, but it is dull beyond expression and failed to excite any particular interest. Other authors attempted the same type of tragic endeavour, but none with any signal success. Some few tried to fuse a classical spirit with a romantic, but even these failed to produce anything that rose to the levels of high tragedy. Of these romantically poetic playwrights Charles Robert Maturin won some contemporary fame with his *Bertram* (1816), produced by Kean at the solicitation of Lord Byron and countenanced by Scott. This play, as well as the showy *Manuel* (1817 and *Fredolfo* (1819), is marked by a keen sense of word-beauty, but the excessive sentimentality and pathos introduced into every scene render all these works of minor dramatic importance. So, too, failed Richard Lalor Sheil, who tried to capture the stage by storm, heaping excess upon excess in wild confusion. *Adelaide*

(1816) is a typically scened Germanized play which deals with the subject of the French Revolution, and *The Apostate* (1816) is full of grandiloquent passages which occasionally rise to tragic heights, but which more often sink to bathos. Sheil's tendencies are shown in the fact that for his *Evadne, or, The Statue* (1819) he went to Shirley for his plot. Sometimes this author comes as near as any of his contemporaries to the securing of a truly dramatic note, yet none of his plays, with their admixture of Elizabethan, romantic, and poetic elements, can make any stir in our hearts to-day.

Henry Hart Milman is more restrained. His *Fazio* (1815; acted 1818) was designed as an "attempt at reviving our old national drama with greater simplicity of plot," but it fails in its effort through its rather rambling blank verse and its want of intensity. The plot is a peculiar one, centring round the alchemist Fazio, in whose house Bartolo, an old miser, dies. The former seizes his bag of gold and then pretends he has found the philosophers' stone. In his newly won riches he pays attention to the Marchesa Aldabella, and his wife, Bianca, in a fit of jealousy declares to the authorities that her husband was the murderer of Bartolo. He is hanged, and she dies of a broken heart. As is evident, the theme is hardly one fitted for genuine tragic treatment. Some of Milman's other plays, notably *Belshazzar* (1822) and *Anne Boleyn* (1826), contain excellent scenes, but none can be accorded the title of a great play. For the subject-matter of his *Ivan* (1816) William Sotheby went to Russia. This is a poorly wrought drama of palace intrigue and of would-be philosophical sentiment—typical, in its lack of co-ordinated impression, of so many tragedies of the time. More effective proved the few tragedies of Mary Russell Mitford, *Julian* (1823), *The Foscari* (1826), and *Rienzi* (1828). All of these possess individuality and a few effective scenes, but again there is nothing new, nothing great, nothing strong.

Two dramatists only in these years succeeded in drawing their works out of the general rut of mediocrity. The first of these was James Sheridan Knowles, whose activities were centred mainly in the twenties and thirties of the

century. In some ways Knowles was an ordinary theatrical writer of the period, his comedies and many of his more melodramatic pieces being but little removed above the wild excesses of the spectacular romance so popular at the time. In four plays, however, he pointed the way toward a restoration of poetic drama. *Caius Gracchus* (1815; acted 1823), *Virginius* (1820), *William Tell* (1825), and *The Wife: a Tale of Mantua* (1833), all strike a stronger and more poetic note, showing features which place them high above the ordinary theatrical dramas of the period. They are clearly developed and contain some interesting characters; Knowles' language, too, albeit lacking in poetic power, has something of an Elizabethan ring. His chief defect lies in a lack of concentrated purpose. This is to be seen in may of his episodes, and is marked likewise in his dialogue. At one moment he will soar to the heights of Elizabethan richness, and at another fall to the most ordinary of commonplace sentiment. His plays consequently lack balance.

The other writer of serious drama who rose above the usual standard was Edward Bulwer-Lytton, later Lord Lytton, remembered now for his novels, but famous in his own time as the author of *The Lady of Lyons* (1838), one of the most successful romantic dramas of the time, and of *Richelieu, or The Conspiracy* (1839). These, as well as *Not as Bad as we Seem* (1851), *Money* (1840), *and Walpole, or Every man has his Price* (1869), placed their author among the chief literary playwrights of the age. It is undeniable that in his plays there are to be discovered many features of genuine worth, but at the same time all are marred by cheap sentimentalism and by the introduction of spectacular elements. Here again there was nothing fresh, nothing that could lead to a revival of great dramatic activity.

In surveying the field of early nineteenth-century tragedy we must confess that the few plays of this kind produced in the theatres were by far more truly poetical than any of the similar plays produced in the eighteenth century. At the same time, none are truly great. The usually selected scenes and the endeavour to devise plots of a novel

kind tinge them all with a hue of improbability. Many are weakly planned or planned without due knowledge of the stage. Others veer toward the side of the dramatic spectacle and revel in ornate romantic incidents. Above all, there is in every one a painful lack of what we must style intensity. We feel that there was no inner compulsion which drove the authors to write. Some, like Maturin, openly confessed they penned their works in the hope of making some money; others, less mercenary, thought that the theatre might bring them fame or notoriety. Of no single drama can we say, "Here is a work the writing of which called forth the author's whole strength and innermost being." Even Lillo's *The London Merchant,* poor as the language of that tragedy is, takes precedence of these in the early nineteenth century, because of its evident sincerity of purpose.

(ii) Romantic Melodrama

The most characteristic dramatic type of this period was, as has been noted, the dramatic romance, where no calls were made upon the dramatist to indulge in psychological delineation, and where showy effects made up for lack of finer language. Most of these dramatic romances were melodramas, in the original sense of that word; the majority were dominated by German example, and all freely employed the language of artificial sentimentalism. During the last years of the eighteenth century the influence of France suddenly disappeared, and all eyes were turned to the genius of Northern Europe. For this there were several reasons. Novelty, certainly, was in this change of orientation. The Parisian theatre had been well ransacked, and here was virgin soil for the dramatic plunderers. Politically, too, Germany was more desirable to deal with. The Germans were soon to become our allies; our ruling dynasty was German. France was now a republic, and the excesses of the revolutionaries were turning almost all men against her. Above all, Germany had that to provide for which all Europe was craving, a distinctly individual note in the theatre. Lessing had proved himself the only man

in Europe with a true idea of what the drama implied, and had already made fresh essays in the domestic tragedy. Goethe had produced his *Götz von Berlichingen,* starting thereby a whole school of medievalism. Schiller had written, in *Die Räuber,* one of the most distinctive of eighteenth-century plays, and even to Kotzebue, condemned as he is to-day, may be given the credit of establishing in his *Menschenhass und Reue,* his *Falsche Scham* and other similar works, a more pronounced form of *drame* than so far had been attempted. Small wonder was it, then, that the English dramatists turned to these men, and our only regret can be that they did not follow more firmly Lessing's and Schiller's lead. From Germany, however, they took only external things. They seized upon Kotzebue's sentimentalism rather than on Schiller's tragic tone. They misunderstood their originals and made spectacular that which had possessed true elements of greatness.

The earliest adaptation of a German work seems to have been Johnstone's *The Disbanded Officer* (1786), a rendering of Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm;* within a few years of that date the London bookshops were literally full of translations and adaptations from Lessing, from Kotzebue, from Schiller, from Iffland, from Kratter, from Goethe, and even other lesser and now long-forgotten authors. From Germany, too, more adventurous writers passed to other lands, the first rendering from the Danish appearing in Wilson's *Poverty and Wealth* (1799).

Among these authors three distinct strains of feeling can be traced. The first of these is the sentimentalism marked in the works of Kotzebue, and, akin to that, the deeper humanitarianism of Goethe. The second is the medieval atmosphere as expressed in the latter author's *Götz von Berlichingen,* which was translated by Sir Walter Scott in 1799. The third is the richer dramatic force in Schiller's dramas. It must be admitted that the majority of these translations were reading plays, never actually performed upon the stage, and that their influence was probably greater on the poetic closet drama of England than upon the theatre. At the same time, they aided in moulding

and forming all the dramatic literature of the early nineteenth century. Kotzebue laid his spell upon the English playwrights, and taught them how to express new problems. Goethe aided in the development of medievalism, and Schiller gave new types and scenes. When we reach the tragedies of Byron we shall see how deeply he was influenced by *Die Räuber* and *Die Verschwörung des Fiesco zu Genua.* The French correctness and the French sentimentalism had gone. Instead of extolling the beauties of the Gallic tongue, the translator of *The Robbers* (1792) could declare that "the French language in point of energy is far inferior to our own tongue, and very far beneath the force of the German." The whirligig of time had brought its revenges, and Gothicism reigned in the world of poetry and drama.

These Gothic invaders who came to usurp the territory of neo-classicism found assistance both within and without. If German influence fully established the reign of the medieval play, native writers, long before the first translations from Goethe, had called upon Ossian and other antique bards for inspiration. Dingy caverns and mouldering graves and *rococo* castles were popular even as far back as the seventeen-sixties and the seventeen-seventies. Thus John Home in *The Fatal Discovery* (1769) had early made use of Macpherson's work, but the production must have been somewhat amusing, if we are to judge of the account of its performance. "On the stage, we saw the youthful Ronan (acted by Barry) *bounding* with all the vigour and alacrity that age, gout, and rheumatism, usually inspire. The heroes of this truly Erse performance,

> *Whe never yet had being,*
> *Or, being, wore no breeches,*

were invested in gold and purple, while a Grecian palace was allotted to the monarch of the rock." Such, however, was but a beginning, and soon the scene-painters were at work transforming their Grecian palaces into dilapidated *châteaux* and gloomy dungeons oozing with foul slime.

In mentioning this Ossianic tragedy by Home, attention may be called to his slightly less romantic, but much finer

and more popular, drama *Douglas* (acted Edinburgh 1756, London 1757). This play, which takes for its subject-matter a semi-historical legend preserved in ballad form, although written in a style which shows how deeply the author was influenced by contemporary pseudo-classic tragedy, yet breathes forth an atmosphere of mild romance in its characters and in its sentiments. Here we can see the beginnings of that movement which was to lead toward the literary revival which revolutionized the whole of English and of Continental literature at the end of the eighteenth century.

Whatever attempts were made in this direction in the earlier years found full support in the sentimentally romantic works translated in the last years of the century. Then came Matthew Gregory Lewis, author of *The Monk* (1795), an excitingly gloomy novel, with his supernaturalism. *The Minister,* an adaptation from the German, was published in 1797, and a year later appeared his most famous play, *The Castle Spectre.*[1] A feudal baron, a vicious monk, a noble hero, a valiant heroine, go to make up a drama of constant turmoil and thrilling situations. With it we have moved from the realm of tragedy to that of the dramatic romance.

It is difficult, in going through the many adaptations from the German and the innumerable imitations in like style with which these years are filled, to determine exactly where the realm of tragedy ends and that of romantic drama begins. *Pizarro* (1799), Sheridan's adaptation of Kotzebue's original plan, is as spectacular as any serious play could well be, but it is designed as a regular tragedy and no doubt must be classed with the other tragedies of the time. Indeed, almost the whole of the dramatic activity of this age came to take on a colouring of the spectacular play. It is obvious that here lay nothing of paramount importance, and that a detailed examination of particular plays would be out of place in a work of this kind. The study of the romantic drama is an interesting one, and of prime import if we are to appreciate aright the development

[1] It was acted in December 1797 and published in 1798.

of modern drama, but at present one or two typical examples of this form may be sufficient to give an idea of the species. A start might well be made with *The Iron Chest* (1796), a popular piece by George Colman the Younger. The source of this work is William Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams,* and it employs liberally a series of exciting and grotesque incidents calculated to capture the attention of a not too exacting audience. Sir Edward Mortimer in this play is head keeper of the New Forest. Some time previously he has been tried on a charge of murder, but comes from the court acquitted. Wilford learns his secret, and Sir Edward, thinking to get rid of him, accuses him of robbery. Wilford, however, being the hero, is successful in his project, and Sir Edward's guilt is proved by an unlucky document preserved in an iron chest. There is nothing here but the ordinary melodramatic story of concealed crime, including a villain and a distressed hero cut to measure. Another typical piece of the same kind is William Dimond's *The Foundling of the Forest* (1809). Here Baron Longueville is the villain. He loves Geraldine, daughter of De Valmont, and tries, to reach his end, to murder Florian, the foundling. His plot fails; and meanwhile it is discovered that De Valmont's long-lost wife still lives. Bertrand, Longueville's tool, is smitten with conscience, and through his means it is discovered that Florian is De Valmont's son. Again a common story of criminal purpose and distressed virtue all duly coming right in the end. Still a third specimen may be taken at random, this time an earlier work, James Boaden's *Fontainville Forest* (1794). The scene is a ruined Gothic abbey in the fifteenth century. There Lamotte in his poverty has taken refuge. Walking in the wood one day he hears cries of terror, and arrives in time to save Adeline, whom he takes back to his wife. Driven to despair by hunger, he waylays the Marquis of Montault. The latter, visiting the abbey, finds in Lamotte the highwayman who had assaulted him, and forgives him only on condition that he attempts to persuade Adeline to become his mistress. Suddenly, however, this evil Marquis discovers that the

maiden is none other than the daughter of his own brother, whom long since he had murdered. Like Baron Longueville he is exposed and commits suicide. The play has all the trappings dear to the heart of romance—the ancient abbey, the theme of robbery, a ghost in a darkened room, and a long-concealed murder suddenly exposed.

One might go through the whole sorry array of these pieces and fail to discern a single novel note. Their characters are the same; their settings are the same; their language is the same. Some years later, certainly, a few elements of a fresh type were brought in when Scott's novels came to be dramatized, but in reducing the *Waverley* series to the limits of stage representation the novels were transformed. As it is, it is evident that many of Scott's works lend themselves admirably to melodramatic treatment. In *Rob Roy* we have the bandit of sympathetic heart, driven to theft and rapine by the oppression of the great, we have a hero in young Osbaldistone, a graceful heroine with a secret in Diana Vernon and a thorough villain in Rashleigh. It did not take much alteration to fit such work into the rigid mould of the melodramatic play. The true tragedy of early nineteenth-century dramatic activity is that even the forces of good—the charm of Scott and the depth of Goethe—were utilized by the forces of evil.

CHAPTER III

COMEDY AND COMIC OPERA

IF tragedy declined during this period, comedy no less showed a decided degeneracy. The size of the theatres, as is evident, forbade not only the expression of subtle tragic atmosphere, but also the interplay of wit which marks out the highest forms of comic endeavour. Farce and comic opera vied with sentimentalism for priority; few dramatists made any attempts to strike out upon new paths.

The sentimental strain was carried on by a multitude of playwrights, of whom George Colman the Younger, Mrs Elizabeth Inchbald, and Thomas Holcroft were the chief. The first of these was a clever theatrical writer, never willing to prove a martyr for art's sake. Gifted with a vast sense of fun and a Sterne-like twist of mind, he gaily provided for his audiences what they desired. Winning a great success with *Inkle and Yarico* in 1787, he continued till 1808 writing a series of comedies, farces, and musical entertainments designed to catch the trivial tastes of his contemporaries. *John Bull* (1805) and *Who wants a Guinea?* (1805) are fair farcical comedies, but like the rest of Colman's productions call for small attention here. Mrs Inchbald is a more important writer. Fired with enthusiasm for French and later for German sentimental problem drama, she wrote a series of plays among the best that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century saw. *I'll Tell You What* (1786) is an excellent satirical play of its kind, and *Such Things Are* (1788) is a capably written problem play directed against the evils of the prison system. Her greatest success, however, was not her best-penned play, *Lover's Vows* (1798), an adaptation from Kotzebue, winning her instant and long-sustained fame. When we regard her work as a whole, Mrs Inchbald must be accredited as one of the most distinguished women dramatic

writers of the eighteenth century. She had knowledge of theatrical requirements, a certain power of drawing character, and an easy pen.

Already Thomas Holcroft's *The Road to Ruin* (1792) has been glanced at, but this was only one of a score and a half of plays written by him and produced between 1778 and 1806. While Holcroft's style was prevailingly sentimental he was capable of engaging in other forms of drama. One of his earlier works, for example, *The Choleric Fathers* (1785) is a pleasing comic opera of Spanish love and intrigue, presenting a point of originality in making Don Pimiento, the philosopher, and Don Salvador agree (contrary to the long-prescribed traditions of Spanish parental authority) to the marriage of their respective son and daughter.

Comic opera of this and of other types, of course, supplied much of the dramatic fare during these years. Some were romantic, such as Pearce's *The Midnight Wanderers* (1793), where a Marquis de Morella, escaping from France, is robbed by a rascally Spanish innkeeper. Others were sentimental, such as Charles Dibdin's *Liberty-Hall: or, A Test of Good Fellowship* (1785), where Rupee is presented to us as rioting away his time and money in the company of a set of parasites, Nettle, Fidgit, Ap Hugh, and others. Indefatigably Dibdin and the rest rang the changes on this type, rarely failing to secure some measure of success. When the audiences tired of Spanish intrigue the playwrights turned to sentimentalism, and from sentimentalism to farce, until in 1816 they arrived at Shakespeare. It was in this year that Frederic Reynolds turned *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into an opera, and pleased with his own ingenuity set sacrilegious hands on *The Comedy of Errors* (1819), *Twelfth Night* (1820), *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1821), and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1824). To the first of these Reynolds wrote a preface declaring that his chief object was "the preservation of all SHAKESPEARE'S beauties," but that he found himself "compelled to alter, transpose, introduce new Songs, and new Speeches . . . to write the whole of one additional Scene, and part of another." The result is as might be expected, with songs such as the following:

Recall the minutes that are fled,
Forbid fleet time to move,
To new life wake the sleeping dead,
But ne'er recall my love.

Forbid the stormy waves to roar,
The playful winds to rove.
Revive the sun at midnight hour,
But ne'er recall my love.

Audiences were pleased with this stuff and eagerly patronized the Reynoldized bard of Avon.

Frederic Reynolds by no means confined himself to the comic opera. He was, as well, an energetic writer of comedy and farce, all of the most trivial and nonsensical sort. One of his many plays, *How to Grow Rich* (1793), might be taken as typical of his style. The dialogue is ridiculously poor, and the characters are nothing but puppets. There is would-be satire in the piece, directed at gamblers, country justices, and avaricious tradesmen, but all the spice that animated satirical works in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries has gone. We are left with mere vapid expressions of no strength or individuality. Farce, in the period under discussion, had a glorious career. It had, certainly, to battle against the rivalry of melodrama and of the comic opera, but it had nothing to fear from comedy itself. Most of these pieces are unoriginal enough. Mrs Cowley has been noted for her work in comedy in the eighties of the century, but many of her most successful pieces were in the farcical strain. *Who's the Dupe?* (1779) is fairly representative. Here one Doiley, an uneducated man, wishes to have a scholar as a son-in-law. Obligingly Granger, who loves the fair Elizabeth, poses as a man of learning and wins his bride. Nothing could be more hackneyed, yet pieces such as these seem to have met with approval in the last decades of the century. In the nineteenth century writers of such pieces are innumerable, barely any rising to distinction. A few such as John O'Keeffe may be mentioned because of their extraordinarily prolific output, but hardly because of any especial merits.

A few authors, it is true, struck out along paths of their own. Thomas Morton, author of *Speed the Plough* (1798),

Secrets worth Knowing (1798), and *The School of Reform* (1805), showed a considerable power in the painting of contrasted characters. His comedies lack *verve,* but there is in each a decided strength and individuality of utterance. Still more interesting is John Tobin, two of whose plays mark a novel attempt in the dramatic literature of the nineteenth century. The first of these, *The Honey Moon,* was acted in 1805, the second, *The Curfew,* in 1807. *The Honey Moon* deals with a thoroughly romantic theme. Three plots are here welded together. In the first the Duke of Aranza marries Juliana, pretending that he has suddenly become poor; in the second the misogynist Rolando is conquered by Zamora, who serves him in the disguise of Eugenio; the last tells how Count Montalban persuades the merry, gay Volante to marry him. It is evident that we have here a tissue of Shakespearian imitations recast in a blank-verse form which recalls to us the melodies of Fletcher. There are suggestions from *The Taming of the Shrew,* while Rolando is obviously Benedick, and Zamora is Viola, but the style recalls the Jacobeans rather than the verse of Shakespeare. For the first time since the early seventeenth century an author had succeeded in penning a really good romantic comedy. More romantic in the later sense of the term, *The Curfew* deals with a theme which reminds us of Cumberland's *Joanna of Montfaucon,* taken from Kotzebue. The story is one of "feudal times" with the supposed widower Hugh de Tracy, "a Baron," as the central figure. His daughter Florence loves Bertrand, a vassal, but in the end the long lost wife reappears to reveal a long-lost high-born son. The plot is thoroughly melodramatic, but the language is once more Fletcherian, and the play as a whole stands out above the usual rut of such romantic dramas.

Tobin's endeavours were not to be followed up by others. Few cared to risk their names in this following of seventeenth-century plots, and most of those who attempted to write comedies of a slightly higher sort preferred to trust to satire, rough wit, sentimentalism, and farce. There was hardly any opportunity for the expression of true comedy.

CHAPTER IV

THE POETIC DRAMA

ONE of the two large sections into which the drama was split in the romantic period was, as has been seen, the poetic closet play. Some of these were intended for the stage, and were received with cold regard by the managers; some were written confessedly with no view to production in the theatre; but all were tinged with the same rich poetical colouring, all showed that they had been composed by writers whose minds were filled with high imagination, but whose spirits hardly would consent to be bridled by the grim necessities of stage requirements. It may be noted here that not all the poets of the Romantic Revival had their works rejected. Coleridge was able to see his *Remorse* performed; Lord Byron achieved a certain success with one or two of his plays; and Joanna Baillie, writing fundamentally for the reader, succeeded in getting access to the stage. It will be convenient here to treat these acted poetic plays along with those which never were produced, as the few tragedies accepted by the managers were by way of being exceptions to a general rule which debarred the poets from the playhouses.

An examination of the various plays included in this 'poetic' category under their respective styles would be almost impossible, and it may be sufficient here to examine briefly the work of the better-known poets, taking their activities as typical of, if more imaginative than, a vast number of other works of the time. Among the early plays of this type Joanna Baillie's *Plays on the Passions,* issued in a series of three volumes in 1798, 1802, and 1812, are representative of a well-meaning desire, shared by many, to infuse new life into the theatre. Anyone now reading these long-forgotten dramas cannot fail to be struck by their poetic power. The language rarely sinks

to mediocrity, and rises at times to a truly impassioned utterance. Yet the *Plays on the Passions* are not great tragedies. Joanna Baillie had no real knowledge of the stage, and as a consequence her dramas frequently fail in regard to technique. She was merely a woman of letters condescending to show the theatre what it ought to be; she was not, as every playwright should be, honestly anxious to make herself acquainted with the many requirements of the playhouse. Beyond that, too, her tragedies have their weaknesses. The authoress has gone the wrong way to work. Shakespeare, we may believe, did not say to himself, "I shall write a play on Jealousy," and turn out *Othello,* or "I shall write a play on Pride," and turn out *Lear.* The cardinal passion of Shakespeare's dramas is dependent upon the characters and the theme; Joanna Baillie's plays have character and theme dependent on a preconceived passion. This error, it may be noted, was shared by other more distinguished poets: Coleridge's *Remorse* is a cardinal instance. Moreover, in penning their tragedies the greater dramatists never limit themselves to one emotion. Joanna Baillie never seems to trust herself to speak of pride when her theme is jealousy, or to speak of hate when her theme is ambition. She has successfully documented men's emotions, boxed them up in nice little romantic caskets, to be opened one at a time with excessive care. Still further, Joanna Baillie's plays display marked crudities. Her love of murder as a dramatic device makes many of her situations monotonously stereotyped, and her weakness for revealing to the spectators or readers the whole development of the plot in her first act renders the latter portions of her tragedies uninteresting. The only one of her plays which won any sort of success on the stage was *De Montfort* (acted 1800), and that moderate success the authoress owed apparently less to her own genius than to a wonderful piece of stage-carpentry by which the theatre was turned into a fourteenth-century church magnificently decorated.

Of the several members of the early or 'Wordsworth' group of romantic poets, all tried their hands at play-writing.

Of these, Robert Southey, because of the immense influence he exerted on the others, may first be mentioned. His dramas all belong to the early pantisocracy period, when his heart was thrilled by visions of a millennium heralded by the French Revolution. *The Fall of Robespierre. An historic drama,* written in collaboration with Coleridge, appeared in 1794, and *Wat Tyler; a Dramatic Poem* was issued surreptitiously by his enemies in 1817, when its author had long left his youthful republican sentiments and had turned to Toryism instead. Both of these are pitiful enough, and the latter reads almost as if it were a parody of sentimental, humanitarian melodrama. They probably aid in indicating another weakness in the nineteenth-century poetic drama. All the poets of the time were doctrinaire; they sometimes seemed to abandon the bare slopes of Parnassus in order to preach pathetically from somewhat rickety pulpits. They loved to make their poems didactic. Didacticism may be a very honourable thing in its own way, but to the drama it must be anathema. The playwright may show his opinions indirectly, if he pleases; he may state a problem or lay open some festering social sore; but as soon as he begins to use his plays as if they were sermons, and his theatre as if it were the church, he inevitably fails.

A trifle more successful was Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his *Remorse* (1813), a revised version of the early *Osorio,* which had been sent to Sheridan as early as 1797 and impolitely refused. *Remorse* reminds us somewhat of Joanna Baillie's productions. Don Alvar is the upright hero of the play, whose life is plotted against by his evil brother, Ordonio. After a thrilling series of adventurous actions, in the course of which the honest Moor, Isidore, and Ordonio are slaughtered, Alvar throws off his disguise, and the whole ends on a moderately happy note. There is little universality in the work, and rarely if ever do we thoroughly associate ourselves with the characters. In general atmosphere this work shows clearly the influence of German romantic dramas, the theme of two brothers, one of whom is honest and the other evil-minded, being

fairly common. Perhaps, however, too much may be made of the influence on this tragedy of Schiller's *Die Räuber;* the influence, if any, is rather indirect than direct.

Some of the same defects may be traced in the pessimistic *Borderers* (written 1795–6) of William Wordsworth. This play even more than *Osorio* may be traced in inception to *Die Räuber.* The crime committed with the best-intentioned motives is clearly a legacy of the German drama, but Wordsworth has nothing of Schiller's power over dramatic form. Touches of character-delineation there are in Marmaduke and Oswald, but never carried out to fullness, so that the personages of the tragedy remain without life. The plot is chaotically constructed, and the author is led to pour forth in unrestrained narrative pages of blank verse in his most uninspired strain.

Sir Walter Scott, too, tried his hand at drama. His studies in German literature led him to write his rather pedestrian rendering of *Götz von Berlichingen,* and from that he turned to more original composition in *The House of Aspen* (printed 1830). This latter work is thoroughly in the German style, and can take rank only with the spectacular plays of *The Castle Spectre* class. Nowhere in it does the author of *Waverley* show that power which was to make him one of the greatest literary figures in Europe.

Other writers of the time fondly hoped for success in the theatrical world. Charles Lamb, who furnished Coleridge with the prologue for *Remorse,* attempted a tragedy in *John Woodwill,* to which was given originally the title of *Pride's Cure* (written 1799; printed 1801). This tragedy, which Lamb submitted unthanked to Kemble, again displays well the weakness of the poetic drama of the time. Poetry there is in it, with, as might have been expected, numerous reminiscences of the Elizabethan dramatists, but of co-ordinated central power it has none, and the characterization is, at best, mere sketchy patchwork.

When we come to the later or 'Byron' group there is an equal attention paid to drama. Byron himself left a series of dramas, some of which were acted; Shelley gave us *The Cenci* and *Prometheus Unbound;* Keats penned his *Otho the Great.*

Of Keats' effort, executed in collaboration with Armitage Brown, not much need be said. It was apparently composed in the year 1819, and actually was accepted for production at Drury Lane, although it was never produced. The story is not an interesting one, and the characterization is weak. The scene is set in the Dark Ages. Conrad, the villain, reunited in friendship to Otho, weds his sister, Auranthe, to the latter's son, Leopold. The maiden, however, has, in order to shield her own stained honour, slandered the innocent Erminia, whose lack of guilt is witnessed by the monk Ethelbert and by Albert. In the end Auranthe dies, and Leopold goes mad. The purposes of the characters do not always seem plain, and the verse, contrary to what might have been expected, is of a somewhat lumbering nature. Here, decidedly, Keats displays none of his genius.

Shelley's *The Cenci* (1820) deserves more careful notice. It is certainly true that this is one of the most striking tragedies among the many poetic plays of the century, but we must guard against overrating it because of the general level of dramatic mediocrity. Assuredly we may find in it many defects, defects due to the lyrical nature of the author and to his lack of theatrical knowledge. Many passages seem to be dramatically unnecessary, and at times the wealth of the language makes the action drag. Even beyond this we may question whether *The Cenci* actually succeeds in its aim. Beatrice Cenci is obviously the central figure, but, in reading as on the stage, she somehow fails to convince us. Her uncompromising denial of complicity in the murder of her father seems to us not in harmony with her character as displayed in the first acts and at the end of the play. It seems here as if Shelley had been misled by his own idealistic visions. For him Beatrice's pollution was a mere earthly thing; it did not, or should not, have affected the freedom of her mind. Had she been perfect, therefore, she ought to have allowed her father's crime to go unavenged. As it was, Shelley evidently desired to display in her a fatal flaw, which took form in her desire for vengeance. So soon as she had given way to that

desire, evil impulses came upon her, and her character weakened. The tragedy, therefore, appears to be set on a plane too high above this earth. For the ordinary reader or spectator Beatrice's ἁμαρτία is unintelligible, few being able to soar with the author of the "Ode to the West Wind" to the idealistic realms where his airy spirit found a home and resting-place. This defect in *The Cenci* is greater than that commonly adduced, the ghastliness of the plot. Certainly the theme possesses a horror which even fine acting cannot dispel, but this we might have forgiven had the purposes of the characters been thoroughly intelligible. The greatest drama is idealistic in essence, but fundamentally it lays its basis in the common aspirations and passions of mankind.

Among the various poets of this period Lord Byron comes nearest to success in the world of drama. His plays are not only more numerous than those of the others; they possess greater power and reveal a surer knowledge of theatrical technique. The dramas of this author commence with *Manfred* (1817), and continue through *Marino Faliero* (1820), *Sardanapalus, The Two Foscari,* and *Cain* (all 1821), to *Werner* (1822). All of these reveal the presence of a creative spirit at once more in touch with ordinary life and more tragically majestic than may be found in any of the other poets. The Romantic writers habitually put themselves forward in their dramas, but not Coleridge, Shelley, or Keats could have been a tragic hero. Byron, however, is shaped in that mould from which issued forth, more than two centuries previously, the tremendous heroes of Christopher Marlowe. Like Faustus and Tamburlaine Byron had colossal aspirations; like them the universe, and the universe alone, took toll of too great human presumption. The creator of *Childe Harold* and of *Don Juan* had in him the stuff of which great drama is made. In general, it would appear to the present writer that Byron's plays are immeasurably underrated. We may say that in many respects they fail, that one is a bad imitation of Goethe's *Faust* and another a weak replica of Otway's *Venice Preserv'd,* but there nevertheless remains about them the spirit of greatness. *Manfred,* perhaps, is the weakest of them all, although nowhere has Byron

so fully expressed his misanthropic hatred of man and his appreciation of the grandeur of Nature's solitary spaces. With *Manfred* must be associated *Werner; or, The Inheritance,* dedicated to Goethe and clearly influenced both by *Götz von Berlichingen* and by *Die Räuber.* In this drama Siegendorf is shown to us, disguised as Werner, stranded in a decayed palace in Silesia. His arch-enemy, Stralenheim, suddenly arrives in the same spot. In his poverty the former, through a secret passage, goes and robs the latter, and a soldier called Gabor is accused of the crime. In order to save the man whom he knows to be innocent Werner places this soldier in the concealed passage. Meanwhile events have developed. Ulric is discovered to be Werner's son; in hatred he murders Stralenheim, and Gabor is now supposed to have been the assassin. Werner makes efforts to discover him, but when he is found the guilt of Ulric is shown. Tragic emotion thus results from the pride and passion of Werner and from the contortion of family hate inherited by his son, Ulric. At the same time, Byron has been extraordinarily restrained in his treatment of the theme, and the stage is left bloodless at the close. Tragic passion has been artistically aroused without the necessity of making any of the characters pay the extreme penalty. *Sardanapalus,* too, is a powerful drama. The character of the hero, effeminate yet capable of heroic action, and that of Myrrha are excellently portrayed. So also *The Two Foscari,* condemned as that drama is, contains touches of true dramatic talent. We must remember that in judging those plays we must deal with them as tragedies, not as pieces of poetry. Only too many critics of Byron, approaching him through the poetry of the period, have condemned his dramatic works because they lack verse melody; but verse melody, after all, is not what should be sought for first in a drama. It is character and plot and expressionate dialogue which are required. With *Cain* we possibly part company with the theatre. Some of the other plays might have been, in the author's words, "neither intended, nor in any shape adapted, for the stage," but the profession was half hypo-

critical; *Cain* is decidedly a closet play, a poetic expression of faith given dramatic form only for convenience, and as such its beauties cannot be entered into here.

Of the other poets of the time Walter Savage Landor deserves remembrance for his powerful *Count Julian* (1812) and its later counterparts, *Andrea of Hungary and Giovanna of Naples* (1839) and *The Siege of Ancona* (1846). The first of these is decidedly the greatest. Planned on a Grecian scale, it deals in Landor's characteristic style with that Spanish legend which years before had provided Rowley with material for *All's Lost by Lust*. The tremendous conflicting passions of Count Julian are shown with all that granite restraint which Landor pent into his exquisite epigrams. The tragedy is quite unsuited for stage presentation, unless that stage presentation were on as vast a scale as his own conception, but the delineation of character no less than the treatment of the plot show that the romantic poets were not without capacities for dramatic writing. Had Marlowe and Shakespeare lived in an age of reviews and a reading public, perhaps we might not have had the tragedies which the necessity of living made them write for the stage. Perhaps, after all, the Elizabethan age was not so truly dramatic as we are accustomed to think it, nor the early nineteenth century so purely lyrical; external causes may well have had much to do with the shaping of the characteristic expression of each.

With Landor must be considered three other poets who stand somewhat apart from the major three figures of whom the central hero was Byron. The first of these was Thomas Lovell Beddoes, a keen student of Elizabethan verse and one, like Webster, almost in love with easeful death. His imagination is gloomy, his visions *macabre,* and the true expression of his genius is to be found in the strange work entitled *Death's Jest Book,* issued posthumously in 1857, full of powerful if somewhat crude passions and scattered with lyrics of a sterling beauty; the same elements appear also in his earlier work, *The Bride's Tragedy* (1822). Of a similar type is Charles Jeremiah Wells' single masterpiece,

Joseph and his Brethren, originally published in 1823 and revised in 1876. Flashes of lurid light glance through this play, which critics are not far wrong in tracing back to the spirit of Marlowe. The last of this trio is Richard Henry Horne, author of *Cosmo de Medici* (1837), *The Death of Marlowe* (1837), *Gregory VII* (1840), and *Judas Iscariot* (1848). Had these plays been written in 1600 we should probably now esteem them as among the best works of the Elizabethan dramatists, but their spirit is wholly out of touch with the time in which they were written. Majestic conceptions are in them and a rich rush of gorgeous poetry, but they betray the same weakness visible in all the poetic plays of the Romantic period; they give nothing new to the theatre. Fundamentally they are but imitations of the grandeur of earlier dramatic activity.

Considerable space might be given to many other writers of similar poetic plays during the Byron period, but these may serve as typical of the general productivity. In nearly every drama there are brilliant scenes, in each there is some beauty of language and occasional flashes of insight into human character in times of emotional stress. Many show able imitations of early Elizabethan dramatic activity, and strength, sometimes of a titanic nature, is not lacking. We seem to see that here the theatre might have gained a new life, had its doors not been shut to the numerous poets clamouring for entrance. At the same time, these poets in reality could not have brought to the playhouse anything save old themes treated in a finer way. Romance coloured their lives, and they knew not how to delve below into the sorrows of ordinary existence. What the theatre wanted was the impulse that comes from reality, an impulse that ere long was to proceed from Scandinavia, and the theatre, had it welcomed the poets on to its stage, fostering thus another Elizabethan period, might well have hindered rather than furthered the remarkable revival of dramatic work which characterizes our own period.

That the poets would never have consented to bow their knees to true realism is well seen in the works of those who followed Shelley and Byron. Lord Tennyson and Browning

both patronized the drama, even as their predecessors had done, but in the same way and without striving to infuse into the form anything of freshness or beautiful novelty. In spite of the "infinite trouble" which the former bestowed on his tragedies *Queen Mary* (printed 1875; acted 1876), *Harold* (1877), and *Becket* (printed 1884; acted 1891) do not live. Didactic purpose, this time taking the form not of revolutionary altruism, but of patriotic orthodoxy, kills in them the true spirit of drama. The characters seem automata created only to become the mouthpieces of the poet, and the action drags or is chaotically confused by the lack of central purpose in the plot.[1] Of Robert Browning more may be said. Here was one at least who loved not merely to elaborate melodious cadences on which the ear soon surfeits; here was one with a knowledge of men, a dominant will, and a love of reality; here was one who in his mid-career created his famous gallery of *Men and Women*. Undoubtedly Browning was the one best qualified of all these poets (unless we except Byron) to pen successful tragedies, but several things prevented him from reaching perfection in this art. His love of the soliloquy which makes the *Dramatis Personæ* such a magnificent series of dramatic lyrics renders his dramas somewhat slow in movement. His passion for truth in language, which led him to compose verses of a force and crabbedness unknown till his time, marred his dialogue; the language of drama must be realistic, but whenever it becomes obscure action at once begins to flag. His characters, too, are not dramatically successful. Browning loved the odd, the peculiar, the extraordinary, and in his tragedies he is inclined to centre attention on these oddities and let the more commonplace pass by him. Hamlet may be in this way a peculiar character, but beside him the very ordinary Horatio is fully delineated.

[1] It is peculiar that Tennyson's dramas, among the most undramatic of these poetic plays, won a certain success in the theatre, largely due to the efforts of the Kendals and of Irving. *Queen Mary*, *Becket*, and *The Cup* (1881) were all put on by the latter; the Kendals produced *The Falcon* in 1879. *The Promise of May* (1882) and *The Foresters* (1892) likewise were performed on the stage, and the latter at least was successful.

Browning's introduction to the world of drama came through a request of Macready's that the young poet of *Paracelsus* should write something for him. *Strafford* was the answer to this request, a play which Macready dutifully produced in 1837, but which soon had to be put aside. There are elements of greatness in *Strafford,* but the whole of the dialogue is too rhetorical, and the characters, although well delineated, do not seem to mve. For Browning the inner struggle was more important than the outer, and, though in this predilection he was but expressing the tendency of modern tragic development, he thereby rendered his plays less adaptable to the stage. The great merit of *Strafford* is the able contrasting of the characters. Strafford, trying to do good, but ruined by his loyalty to the King, is well opposed to the more resolute Pym, for whom nothing must stand in the way of his firm-wrought purpose. This characterization is of the true tragic proportions; had the dialogue been a trifle less difficult to follow and had the action moved a little more swiftly we might esteem *Strafford* among the greater English historical dramas.

The chaotic splendour of *Sordello* intervened between this play and Browning's next efforts, *King Victor and King Charles* (1842) *and The Return of the Druses* (1843). *Pippa Passes,* issued in 1841, can barely be called a play. *King Victor* is one of Browning's best-wrought pieces. Confining himself to four characters, he has succeeded in gaining a concentration of passion and energy which is lacking in *Strafford.* The conclusion is the only part of the drama which seems to take away from its greatness. The theme is a simple one. In a moment of political crisis the resolute and somewhat treacherous Victor gives over his throne to his son Charles, and the latter, who is whelmed in a series of conflicting doubts and purposes, grants it back to his father when the latter lies on his deathbed. Polyxena, Charles' wife, is the most interesting figure in the play, a fine portrait of "noble and right woman's-manliness," the expression of Browning's own ideal, and D'Ormea is an able study of a political minister. *The Return of the Druses* is somewhat more melodramatic and

seems to go back to earlier romantic sentiment for its inspiration. Here the scene is an island in the Southern Sporades, inhabited by a Syrian race called the Druses. They are under the domination of the Templars. The tragic conflict arises from the fact that, goaded into rebellion by the tyranny of the old Prefect, these Druses accept Djabal as a god reincarnated to free them from oppression, while the mild Loys, an honest member of his order, is striving to release them from bondage. Conflict arises in Loys' mind through his love of Anael, the betrothed of Djabal, and Djabal himself is an interesting study of the born chieftain who, in order to secure his end, pretends to divine attributes. The scene in which Loys discovers Djabal's duplicity is masterly, but once more the drama as a whole is actionless, and obscure phraseology frequently disturbs the development of inner struggles. *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* (1843) betrays some of the same features. There are many scenes in it which are dramatically effective, but some of the language is obscure. The subject is, too, one which must have appeared decadent to contemporary audiences, so that it is not surprising that it met with but a cold reception in the theatre. A poor welcome was also given to *Colombe's Birthday* (printed 1844; acted 1853). In this play one character, that of Valence, stands forward as a majestic figure; but rhetoric again clogs the action. *Luria and A Soul's Tragedy* (1846) are, like *Pippa Passes,* written in a form unsuitable for stage production. Possibly in Browning was a latent genius for the theatre, whose full development was fettered by the fact that the stage of his day demanded works of so trivial a nature that even his adaptive spirit could not stoop to provide them. It may be said that when Marlowe came the playhouse was in almost as poor a state as it was in the nineteenth century, but in that age youth was in the theatre. The early nineteenth century showed the theatre in a confirmed age, and with the large patent houses constantly demanding novel spectacle nothing could be done. The poetic drama, therefore, had to exist for itself; it modified not at all the type of works provided by the various actor-managers.

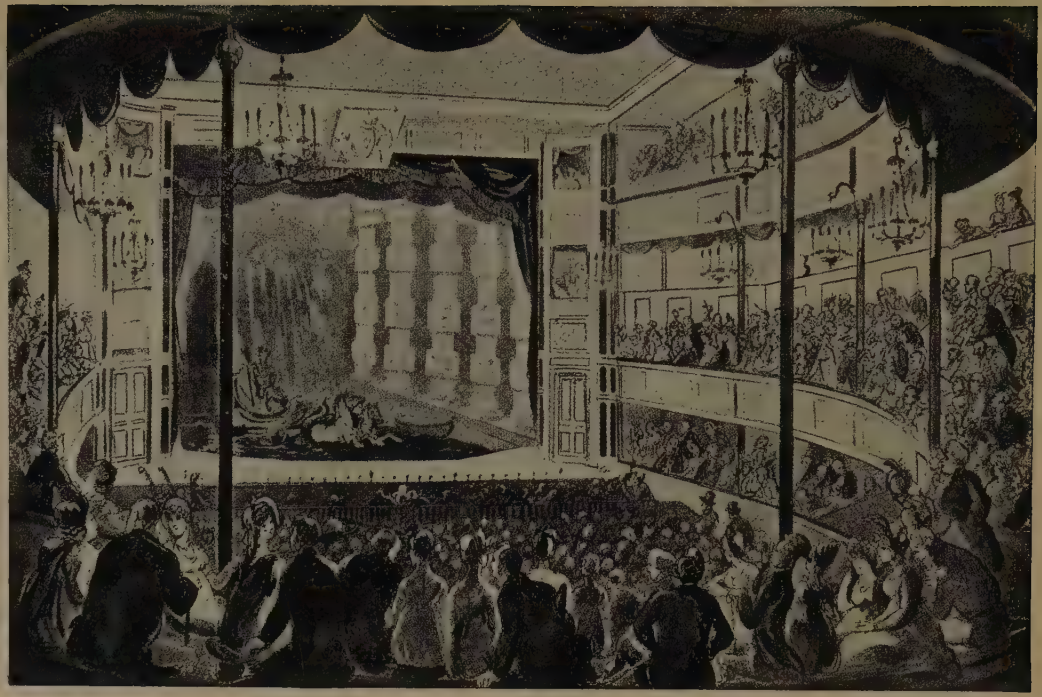
PART VI

THE REVIVAL IN THE THEATRE

CHAPTER I

RELICS OF ROMANCE

FOR a time the old love spectacle, countered by spasmodic attempts to introduce something of a finer quality, persisted in the theatres. The melodramas, now taken from French or German sources, now adapted from current fictional works, continued to please and charm the spectators. A real waterfall and real horses on the stage won success for William Thomas Moncrieff's melodramatic work entitled *The Cataract of the Ganges; or, The Rajah's Daughter* (1822), and Isaac Pocock provided the stage with innumerable adaptations from Defoe and Scott. Then came Dion Boucicault (or Bourcicault), the great force in melodramatic drama from the forties of the century to the time of his death in 1890. Boucicault is a master of the theatre if he is not a great dramatist. No one knew better than he how to weave into a single play those elements of sentimentalism, humour, wit, and excitement which have ever charmed unthinking audiences. He has no inventive power. All his incidents are abstracted from previous works of drama or fiction; but no one possessed to his degree this constructive skill. His characters are stereotyped, villains being villains and heroes heroes, but that was made necessary because of his aim—the subordination of character to what always proves of more immediate interest, the development of a stirring story. Yet Boucicault has certain positive virtues. Much as he may have aided in retarding the true advance of the drama, he showed to other playwrights many secrets of their craft. His method of dealing with his materials is masterly, and his dialogue is essentially dramatic. Indeed, at times, that dialogue be-



A Water Melodrama at Sadler's Wells

comes almost inspired with a naturalism and raciness long forgotten by playwrights contented to provide would-be dignified but bathetic conversations in the 'high-falutin' ' tone. Boucicault's plays are numerous and varied. *The Knight of Arva* (1848), *The Broken Vow* (1851), *The Corsican Brothers* (1851), *The Vampire* (1852), *Geneviève; or, The Reign of Terror* (1853), *Louis XI* (1854), *Jessie Brown; or, The Relief of Lucknow* (1858), *Paul Lafarge* (1870), *Led Astray* (1873), *and Norah's Vow* (1878) all show by their titles alone their inherent qualities. These dramas, however, will not be remembered in the same way as Boucicault's plays of Irish life, where his genuine sense of humour and realistic methods find fuller scope for their expression. *The Colleen Bawn* (1859), *Arrah-na-Pogue; or, The Wicklow Wedding* (1864), *The Shaughraun* (1874), *The O'Dowd* (1873), *and Cuish-ma-Chree* (1887) must always be esteemed for their genuine skill in the depiction of the Irish peasantry.

Other writers of a cognate calibre carried on with Boucicault the melodramatic tradition. Gilbert Abbott à Beckett, who died in 1856, left, besides his farces, his romantic pieces, *The Chimes* (1844) and *Don Cæsar de Bazan* (1844). With à Beckett frequently collaborated Mark Lemon, author of over fifty dramatic works. Lemon's fifty is, however, vastly outdistanced by the thousand odd productions credited to Tom Taylor, another eager adapter of other men's ideas. Associating himself largely with the novelist Charles Reade, Taylor poured forth his melodrama in a continuous stream. *Still Waters Run Deep* (1855) and *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* (1863) still are remembered, and some genuine literary value may be discovered in his numerous historical works, of which perhaps *Jeanne Darc* (1871) and *Anne Boleyn* (1875) are the best, as well as in his melodramatic domestic drama *The Arkwright's Wife* (1873). Still others, such as John Baldwin Buckstone with his *The Flowers of the Forest* (1847) and *Abelard and Heloise* (1834), Benjamin Nottingham Webster with *Paul Clifford; the Highwayman of 1770* (1832), John Oxenford with *The Dice of Death* (1836),

Watts Phillips with *The Woman in Mauve* (1864), Joseph Stirling Coyne with *The Woman in Red* (1868), Edward Fitzball with *Esmeralda; or the Deformed of Notre Dame* (1834), and William Gorman Wills with *Charles the First* (1872; printed 1873) and *Jane Shore* (1874), tried to win success and money in the same way. In each we discover the same tendencies, and can praise only a few for naturalism of dialogue and, as with Boucicault, for occasional flashes of humour.

Several more serious writers, it is true, tried to stem the rising tide of melodrama with heavier tragedies modelled on the older plan. Following Sheil and Maturin came quite a number of men, gifted with some small measure of poetic capability, who endeavoured in their own ways to raise the level of stage performances. Thomas Noon Talfourd, whose *Glencoe; or, The Fate of the Macdonalds* appeared in 1840, won some success in *Ion* (1850). The latter has decided merits, but the language is stilted, leading to soliloquies such as the following:

> *Ion.* Distrust me not.—Benignant Powers, I thank ye!
> [*Exit.*
>
> *Adrastus.* Yet stay—he's gone—his spell is on me yet;
> What have I promised him? To meet the men
> Who from my living head would strip the crown,
> And sit in judgment on me?—I must do it—
> Yet shall my band be ready to o'erawe
> The course of liberal speech, and if it rise
> So as too loudly to offend my ear,
> Strike the rash brawler dead!—What idle dream
> Of long-past days had melted me? It fades—
> It vanishes—I am again a King!

Again we realise that, whatever of value may lie in Talfourd's work, this is not what could rejuvenate the theatre. He may have something of a Greek simplicity, something of the high spirit of destiny in his plays, but that, after all, does not atone for weaknesses such as are apparent in the passage quoted above.

Among the other writers of a similar style John Westland Marston, because of his powerful semi-domestic play *The Patrician's Daughter* (1842), deserves mention. *The*

Patrician's Daughter hints at the coming revival in tragedy. It takes as its theme a subject of immediate interest to the people, anticipating Galsworthy's *Strife* in its treatment of the class-struggle. It is a fine play, but unfortunately no one took the hint which it offered; it remains solitary amid the welter of melodrama, of dull historical tragedy, and of would-be Grecian poetic plays.

In comedy an equal state of suspended animation is traceable. Knowles strove valiantly to make his rather heavy imagination adapt itself to lighter moods, with what success may be seen in *The Hunchback* (1832). Douglas William Jerrold, with a more genuinely humorous touch, but a decided weakness in character-drawing and plot-construction, turned out his series of fairly laughable plays, *Blackey'd Susan, or, All in the Downs* (1829), *Beau Nash; the King of Bath* (1834), *Time Works Wonders* (1845), *The Catspaw* (1850), and a number of others. His style is akin to that of Dickens, for he can see only one side of a man's nature, and he is inclined to exaggerate comic situation and dialogue until all subtlety is lost. His stage effects are often good, but the flimsiness of his comic foundation, added to his lack of breadth and simplicity, make his work of small literary importance.

A few other writers tried to keep alive the richer spirit of comedy, but the majority turned to melodrama, left the ranks of comedy proper to indulge in more popular, and more easily managed, spheres of dramatic composition.

Farce, therefore, and comic opera still dominated the stage. In these realms sported a number of minor playwrights, including among them Robert Barnabas Brough, John Poole, James Robinson Planché, Thomas William Robertson, and Henry James Byron. Brough's endeavours are mostly in the realm of burlesque, of which *Camaralzaman and Badoura; or, The Peri who loved the Prince* (1848) is typical, or of the extravaganza as represented in *Alfred the Great; or, The Minstrel King* (1859). Planché revels more in farce proper. His works are numerous, all flimsy and trivial, but well adapted to call forth a laugh in the theatre. John Poole's *Paul Pry* (1825) is still remembered, and

Robertson before his later set of more serious comedies won an ephemeral success with several pieces of the same nature.

Save for the few tragedies and comedies of a higher cast, all these pieces are "theatrical" in the lower sense of that term; that is to say, they were written with no thought of literary grace, but were designed to please a vitiated public taste and to satisfy the demands of various actor-managers. The majority of them would be trivially effective on the stage when well performed, but read apart from the theatre they seem dull and uninteresting. Above all, they are full of crudities. During the time when the theatre was moving from its platform shape to the modern picture-frame stage no one seems to have divined that new conventions were demanded to suit the changed conditions. Thus the soliloquy still continued a recognized dramatic device even when its absurdity ought to have been apparent to every one; and the aside was freely used when the actor or actress reciting it had to bawl open-mouthed to the distant galleries. What was required to give the drama new life, therefore, was a recognition of changed theatrical conditions, and the elaboration of a new technique for the stage.

The same is true of the themes chosen by the dramatists. The poetic playwrights kept to their historical, classical, or romantic subjects, and few of those who attempted to give something better to the theatre itself departed from the time-honoured ways. Quite naturally, the audience preferred to see romantic themes treated spectacularly and thrillingly rather than listen to the monotonous drone of heavy and ultra-dignified blank verse. One may presume there are but few, even among those who profess regard for the higher theatre, who would prefer to sit through a performance of Talfourd's *Ion* rather than throw themselves whole-heartedly into the melodramatic adventures of some more spectacular piece of the period. After all, the popular writers, even when they were working on an outworn tradition, knew the tricks of the stage, knew how to keep up interest, knew the laws of dramatic cause and effect.

Of these the literary writers were ignorant, and their plays as a consequence are largely valueless.

The romantic spectacle play, however, was running to its end (although still Old Drury and the Lyceum preserve its main features intact), and a new classicism was taking the place of the ultra-romanticism which had become florid in the poetry of Tennyson. The age was ready for a change and a revival. That revival came in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and was due to a series of various causes, some purely theatrical, others definitely literary.

CHAPTER II

CHANGE OF THEATRE, AUDIENCE, AND TONE; IBSEN

Theatrical Conditions

THE most noted theatrical event of the nineteenth century was unquestionably the Act "for regulating theatres" of 1843, by which the monopoly of the two patent houses, Covent Garden and Drury Lane, was destroyed, and the way was kept open for the arising of new houses. This Act was partly the result of the gradual financial degeneracy of the two larger theatres, for Drury Lane had sunk to such depths that resort was made to shilling concerts in an effort to restore solvency; but if the Act was the result partly of the financial condition of the theatres it was none the less dictated largely by a general desire on the part of actors and the public to escape from that vastness of structure which had appeared so just and desirable at the close of the eighteenth century. With this legislation of 1843 new theatres could raise their heads in the Metropolis without fear of suppression, and new efforts could be made for the rejuvenation of the playhouse. It is true that at first small signs of alteration are noticeable as we trace the fortunes of the playhouses and of drama in the middle of the nineteenth century. Indeed, for the decades immediately following the date when the Act was passed through Parliament we might imagine that there was even an increase of melodramatic and spectacular pieces. Men were slow to realize the possibilities of the new *régime,* and so far no inspiration had come to them by which they could rear a new dramatic structure. Gradually, however, the benefits of the alteration in theatrical orientation made their appearance. The smaller theatres that arose to take the place erstwhile occupied by Covent Garden and Drury Lane permitted of the appreciation of both

tragedy and comedy. There were new revivals of Shakespeare and of the better eighteenth-century dramatists. Actors no longer had to mouth it grandiloquently, but were enabled to develop subtler and more delicate styles of performance.

To these smaller theatres came, too, a slightly changed audience. Life was not so dissolute as it had been in the early nineteenth century, and Queen Victoria was setting a more sober tone in Court circles. No longer were the theatres the chosen home of gamblers, rakes, and prostitutes. The middle classes, honest and quiet-minded, came to witness plays in security, unoffended by coarse conversation round them or by missiles playfully flung at spectator or actor. The theatres became more and more houses of artistic endeavour. Perhaps the managers failed to secure any artistic perfection, but the basis was there for that perfection, as it had not been in the early nineteenth century. With this arising of many new theatres, moreover, it was natural that dramatic styles should come to be associated with particular houses. In the earlier days everything, comedy, tragedy, farce, melodrama, comic opera, extravaganza, burlesque, was centred in the two theatres; now, if one theatre specialized in comic opera another could devote itself to more serious drama. This in itself meant that more evenings could be devoted to the higher forms of dramatic literature than was at all possible in the year 1810. In our own times we may find that such a theatre as Daly's is permanently associated with a certain type of romantic opera, that others such as the Lyceum and Drury Lane specialize in melodrama, but that still others such as the New and the Royal Court normally produce regular tragedies and comedies.

Two movements, on the other hand, militate against this system producing the best dramatic work. The first of these, and the most important, is the habit of the long run. Up to the middle of the eighteenth century and even into the nineteenth century runs of any length were unknown. A run of nine nights constituted a record in the early seventeenth century, and the month's performance of *The*

Beggar's Opera in 1728 was regarded as phenomenal. With the rising of spectacular shows, however, runs became necessary if the managers were not to go bankrupt, and we find the length of these series of performances growing in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries from weeks to months, until in our own days we look with calm complacency at bills which inform us that this or that piece has run successfully for over two years. In this we are partly suffering for the sins of our fathers, partly we are paying the penalty of a London grown so huge that it is not a town, but a world in itself. The second movement is that wherein the management and ownership of the theatres are affected. When the two houses of Drury Lane and Covent Garden had the monopoly the patents were vested in the hands of one man or of a group of men who engaged managers to undertake the control of the theatres. When the new theatres were built, on the other hand, many were treated as purely speculative ventures on the part of men not in any way interested in the drama. They were erected and promptly let out either to actor-managers or to various companies which gathered together from time to time. Still worse, they were sub-let and sub-sub-let, so that the expenses for the person actually producing the plays rose to a height out of all proportion to what might have been expected. Actor-managers were, and are, thus hampered in their work, and the old stock companies which had done such good all-round work in the eighteenth century virtually disappeared. The repertory system in our own times exists, somewhat artificially, only in certain more adventurous provincial towns, in the 'Old Vic' and in the Hampstead Everyman theatre, although on the Continent it is still retained and aids there in the production of good drama.

With this happy event of the liberty of the theatres and the consequent gradual change in the audience must be noted the growth of a new criticism. Instead of the metaphysical meanderings of Coleridge or the sometimes over-enthusiastic comments of Lamb, we find in the second half of the nineteenth century the development of what may

fairly be styled scientific criticism. This scientific criticism was precisely what the drama, overburdened already with romantic fervour true and false, required in order that it might rise to some new plane. On the one hand, we note the studies of men like Moulton, who endeavoured to estimate, not Hamlet's psychology, but Shakespeare's dramatic purpose in writing *Hamlet;* on the other hand, we observe the antiquarian researches into the theatre and its customs which led to Mr W. J. Lawrence's illuminating *The Shakespearian Playhouse* and Sir E. K. Chambers' *The Mediæval Stage* and *The Elizabethan Stage.* For the first time men began to have some ideas concerning the form of Shakespeare's Globe theatre, and to realize that the theatre as a whole had advanced steadily and logically from medieval times. This led to many consequences. It aided the rising school of dramatists to evolve a new technique. They were able to see why such and such a convention should have been, and why it should now be abandoned. So, too, they were given the materials on which they could base a fresh dramatic theory. Studying Shakespeare in relation to his time and to the conditions under which he worked, they could see more clearly what things in his work presented a message to the modern period, what belonged decisively to his own age and could offer no suggestions to men of their time. Besides this, the antiquarian researches into the form of the medieval and Elizabethan theatres gave new ideas to the actor-managers. They were enabled to secure new orientation, and look beyond the heavily decorated set-pieces which characterized the spectacular melodrama. Soon the question of rich stage decoration *versus* simplicity came to be put, and men began to wonder whether after all the drama was not most effective when the stage was a bare platform and when the imagination of the spectators was called upon to create visions of leafy forests and palace towers and gloomy dungeons. This question, and questions of a similar nature, gradually led to new endeavours on the part of producers. In the preceding years the manager could think of nothing better than the production of finer, more gorgeous, and more realistic scenery than had been

seen before; now he was faced with new worlds, with new ideas, with infinite possibilities of experiment and improvement.

(ii) Henrik Ibsen and other Continental Dramatists

It is evident that the ground was being prepared for the appearance of a fresh literary technique, but no man in England seemed capable of evolving the conventions which would harmonize with modern conditions. Possibly he might have been forthcoming, but the work of any hypothetical reformer of this sort was anticipated by the appearance in the north of Europe of Henrik Ibsen, destined to become the greatest force in the revival of the present-day theatre. Ibsen started his career as an historical and symbolically fanciful playwright. *Lady Inger of Østråt* (1855) is typical of a number of other dramas in which appeal is directed to national sentiments and in which an attempt is made to pen chronicle history. *Lady Inger of Østråt, however,* even beyond the bewildering complexity of the plot, already reveals the presence of a creative mastermind. The dramatic irony of the work is tremendous. Lady Inger murders a man, hoping to save her son; her victim turns out to be that very son. Eline is engaged to Nils Lykke; Lykke is found to be the hated betrayer of her sister. From these historical or pseudo-historical themes Ibsen turned to domestic subjects, writing on questions of the present day, exposing in his own stern manner the problems he could see round him everywhere, revealing with sure touch the very innermost of human emotions. *An Enemy of the People* (1882), *The Wild Duck* (1884), and *Ghosts* (1881) are of this class. The first deals with the fate of the benevolent and idealistic Dr Stockmann, who, in his zeal, becomes the chief object of the people's hatred. It is not a great play, perhaps, but the sure dramatic touches, such as the bringing over of Stockmann's wife in Act III and the ejaculations of the drunken man in Act IV, show what a powerful dramatic artistry Ibsen possessed. In *The Wild Duck* the plot is more subtle and complicated,

and Ibsen appears to be delving into the inner reaches of the soul. The character of Hedvig gradually takes concrete shape before us, as do those of the honest Hjalmar and the younger Werle. The symbolism of *The Wild Duck* and its pervasive delicacy may be taken as typical of part of Ibsen's work. The sterner side of his nature is revealed in *Ghosts*. In this drama Ibsen wrote his masterpiece. Nowhere has he so succeeded in revealing at once the problem and the reflection of that problem upon the souls of his characters; nowhere has he so united profound psychological delineation with realistic appeal and interest.

In Ibsen, then, the world found a master-mind, one of these few *Übermenschen* beloved by Carlyle and by Nietzsche. It is not, however, merely Ibsen's intellectual greatness which makes him occupy his pre-eminent position; it is the fact that his mind was of a sufficient breadth to make for himself his own dramatic world. In consideration of the influence which he exerted on the English dramatists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it may be well here briefly to indicate the chief points wherein he opened up new paths to his followers.

In the first place, his drama is a domestic drama. Of the old impossible heroics and pathos of the romantic melodrama he knows nothing. His aim is to dramatize the life of his own day. He realized perfectly that the long-antiquated emotions of the spectacular plays had nothing in common with ordinary men and women; that the drama, if it was to rise to its pristine greatness, would have to adapt itself to the needs of the present, be a mirror of the age, and, instead of escaping into romantic fripperies, make itself the stern monitor of the time. In this, as has been seen, Ibsen was anticipated by Heywood in the seventeenth century and by Lillo in the eighteenth, but neither of these had attempted to reveal the fundamental problems of social life. Ibsen wove together the tragedy of the individual soul with the tremendous forces which move in social life like some blind destiny searing and destroying, mankind in their disastrous path seeming no more than an insect fluttering ineffectually against the mighty

barriers which loom up against it. In Ibsen we have not merely domestic tragedy, but social tragedy, the forces of life forming dominating *dramatis personæ* who move unseen across the stage and raise the whole work to the level of tragic passion.

Nor was this the only thing which Ibsen brought to the theatre. With the treatment of domestic scene and of social problems he introduced a new frankness, which at first grated harshly on the ears of prudish Victorians accustomed to the pleasing commonplaces of Tennysonian melody. Here they found a man who dared to speak of things they deemed unspeakable, who laid bare the most festering sores in the body social, who flinched from nothing in his Olympian grandeur. Soon their detestation of this frankness began to wane. *Ghosts,* which had been banned by a prurient censorship, was permitted on the stage, and native writers began to attempt imitations of the Ibsen style. This frankness meant the opening up of new worlds for the dramatists. Not only could they pass from romantic to domestic themes, they could deal with aspects of social life which before had been sternly closed to them; and in dealing with those aspects of social life came to them new ideas and new conceptions of the meaning of the universe.

With this truly epoch-making change in subject-matter and in treatment Ibsen introduced a new technique. He saw that many of the conventions of early nineteenth-century drama were long outworn; he saw that the new theatre demanded a new artistry, and endeavoured to lay the foundations of that artistry. Not only, therefore, did he make of his plays coherent unities, he made them more natural and impressive by his stage methods. The soliloquy and the aside, which had been so useful to romantic dramatists for showing the minds of their villains, he ruthlessly cast aside, substituting therefor a more subtle treatment of dialogue. It is obvious that if a dramatist knows he can make an evil character hiss out his hate or speak his thoughts openly to pit and gallery he will not take such care over his ordinary stage dialogue as he would had these conventions been debarred to him. The change in

technique, therefore, led not only to the sweeping away of ridiculous conventions, but also to an added subtlety in presentation of character and of plot.

This subtlety forms another aspect of Ibsen's greatness, but it is one which he shares with the modern theatre in general. The late Professor Vaughan, in his illuminating *Types of Tragic Drama,* saw clearly that the tendency of drama was always from the less to the more inward; as we watch the progress of tragedy from Æschylus to Shakespeare, from Shakespeare to the writers of the present day, we can witness an attempt on the part of the playwrights to shake off action in order to depict thought. Ibsen, representative in his own age of this movement, showed to his contemporaries many methods of securing this inwardness. Already Browning had subordinated action to development of character, but somehow he failed to make the latter sufficiently interesting. Ibsen, by a series of delicate theatrical touches, keeps our attention awake for the appreciation of a drama which is fundamentally static. Nothing really happens in *Ghosts;* the action is more psychological than physical in *A Doll's House* (1879) and in *The Wild Duck.* No effort is made to charm an audience by a set of exciting incidents; rather are we invited into a quiet room and asked to watch the characters there, watch the expression of their sorrows and joys, and through those sorrows and joys reach to some understanding of their inner selves. The word 'soul' is an awkward one, and the word 'subconscious self' still more awkward, but, using those words with care, we may say that Ibsen strives to show to us, through this expression of ordinary joys and sorrows, ordinary love and hate, ordinary exaltation and despair, the souls or subconscious selves of his *dramatis personæ.* He brings the theatre into line with the added subtlety and delicacy of the time.

Ibsen, of course, does not stand forward as the only Continental dramatist who taught these things to English writers, but he is the chief and most important figure. Others besides him took up the tale. In Germany Frederick Hebbel had been similarly striving to express something

of his hard conception of life and his heavily hammered-out diagnosis of men's souls, now by means of Biblical dramas such as *Judith* (1841) and *Herodes und Mariamne* (1850), now by means of legendary themes such as *Gyges und sein Ring* (1856) and *Die Nibelungen* (1862), now by means of domestic tragedy such as *Maria Magdalena* (1844). *Gyges und sein Ring* is a fine example of symbolic art, in which the honest Gyges is permitted because of his magic ring to see the beautiful wife of Kandaules. The conflicting passions of Gyges, the strangely heroic yet weak figure of Kandaules, the proud and vengeful Rhodope, are all presented before us magnificently in a series of symbolic scenes whereby the inner emotions are suggested rather than enunciated. In *Maria Magdalena* we have, too, a powerful domestic tragedy. Clara, the heroine, is about to have a child by Leonard, who casts her off on hearing that her brother Karl is arrested as a thief. This arrest kills the mother, and the father, stern in his pride, threatens to kill himself if Clara brings shame on him. A Secretary, who is in love with Clara, kills and is killed by Leonard, and Clara drowns herself. The story is a sordid one, but is raised above the lower levels of sordid *bourgeois* drama by the penetrating insight into character and by the sense of fate which is introduced into several of the scenes. Clara's cry, "O God in heaven, I would have pity if I were thou and thou wert I," and the old father's last words, "I don't understand the world any more," seem wrapped in a mystic significance when they are related to the development of the play.

The kindlier and more humane Norwegian Björnstjerne Björnson, too, added his weight to the development of the domestic drama and the new technique, although he preferred the medium of the *drame* to that of tragedy. Like Ibsen he started with a series of historical plays, including *King Sverre* (1861), *Sigurd the Bad* (1862), and *Mary Stuart in Scotland* (1864), but passed from that to serious domestic comedy in *The Newly Married Couple* (1865), *Leonarda* (1879), and *A Gauntlet* (1883). Björnson's work is interesting as showing the development in one writer

of the new technique. He starts with the older conventions, including soliloquy and aside, and passes into the freer domain already occupied by Ibsen. All his social dramas present a problem. *The Newly Married Couple* strives to delineate the soul of a young man, Axel, eager to make his own way in the world, and the gradual awakening of love in the heart of his wife Laura. It is certainly true that Axel is always preaching on one set subject, and so becomes rather the exponent of a particular view of life than a natural character, but the dangerous estrangement of wife and husband as well as the difficult portrait of Mathilde are ably handled. In *Leonarda* the problem is that of the mother who falls in love with her daughter's *fiancé,* but once more the inner beings of the *dramatis personæ* raise the drama above the levels of the mere problem play. Björnson's triumph is *A Gauntlet.* The theme is more serious than that of the others, but ends on a fairly hopeful note. Had Ibsen dealt with the theme he would almost certainly have made it a tragedy. In this play the author is fighting against the blindness and hypocrisy which characterized his own land no less than Victorian England. Svava is a child of the new age; Alfred and the Christensens are denizens of the land of unimaginative and unintelligent hypocrisy. Nowhere has Björnson so succeeded in revealing character, so succeeded in presenting a problem in all its various and widely ramifying aspects.

In other lands too the new style penetrated, coming back here by way of translation. Anton Tchechov in Russia gave to it added subtlety in *The Seagull* (1896) and in *Uncle Vanya* (1897). Tchechov is more visionary than Ibsen, and prefers to deal rather with mental than emotional problems. Ibsen is obsessed, no less than Björnson, with the tremendous difficulties which the fact of sex brings to life; Tchechov deals with mental disappointments, with literary ambitions, and with artistic failures. He excels most when he is treating of the *littérateur* or of the poet, and his highest flights are studies of the unsuccessful. In *Uncle Vanya* his most telling character is Uncle Vanya himself, one whose ideas and emotions have been dulled

and atrophied, and who, on the promise of success in love, is dashed back again to mediocrity. Trigorin in *The Seagull* is a powerful portrait of the unsuccessful visionary, a portrait made all the more striking by the contrast it presents to the boring but worldly successful professor. A similar study of the failure in life appears in *The Swan Song* (1889), this time, however, in age and regret, not in disappointed youth. The old man, tragedian at heart, and murdered by the plaudits of the crowd over his clownish play, is a powerful variation on his chosen theme.

Poland gave us, too, the as yet untranslated Przybyszewski, whose *Snow* (1903) presents a delicate static and symbolic study of inner passions, destiny as an outer force hovering ominously over the little fire-lit room with its windows opening out on to the white expanse of a winter-clad landscape. Everywhere the new style penetrated, becoming more and more symbolic or more realistic, striving to utilize the most recent researches of psychologists and to reveal in yet deeper and more minute detail the hidden reaches of the human heart. So in Sweden August Strindberg has mystically dealt with domestic problems; in Germany Gerhart Hauptmann and Ernst Toller have attempted to deal with "Masses and Men"; in France Eugène Brieux has treated human passion in a would-be realistic manner; and in America writers such as Bronson Howard, Percy MacKaye, and Eugene O'Neill have, amusingly or bitterly, written of the fundamental questions confronting men and women in their social surroundings and amid their social conventions.[1]

All of these aided in giving new materials to the playwrights, and those playwrights, because of the changed conditions in theatrical affairs and because of the new audience, more eager to accept in the plays they witnessed something fruitful of thought and emotion, were enabled to attempt the complete rebuilding of the English stage.

[1] One of the best handbooks on contemporary dramatic literature is *A Study of the Modern Drama*, by Barrett H. Clark. It provides, however, less of guidance than of suggestive questioning concerning the playwrights of to-day.

CHAPTER III

MAIN TENDENCIES

Tragedy and Social Drama

IN entering upon a study of recent dramatic tendencies it may be well to indicate briefly what appear to be the most notable directions in which the drama of to-day is tending. By the drama of to-day I mean that general literary development which succeeded and took the place of the melodrama, farce, and musical comedy of the early and mid-nineteenth century. That development may be traced back to T. W. Robertson's social comedies of the eighteen-sixties, but reached fruition only thirty or forty years after that date. Naturally in the course of fifty or sixty years there have been many greater or less movements in one direction or another. There is a marked change in drama soon after the opening of the twentieth century, and a no less marked change is to be seen in the post-War theatre. Still, certain definite tendencies characterize the finer plays of this period, nearly all the dramatists manifesting each in his own way the common movements of the time.

The first of these tendencies is a heritage from Ibsen and his companions. For the most part, serious drama in the last decades of the nineteenth century and in our own age ceased to deal with themes remote in time or place. Ibsen had taught men that drama, if it was to live a true life of its own, must deal with human emotions, with things near and dear to ordinary men and women. Hence the melodramatic romanticism and the chill pseudo-classic remoteness alike disappeared in favour of a treatment of actual English life, first of aristocratic existence, then of middle-class lives, and finally of labouring conditions. So far as choice of subject-matter is concerned, the break between the *Ion* and *Virginius* of the early romantic period

and the *Nan* and *Waste* of modern days is complete. But difference in subject-matter is not all. With the treatment of actual life the drama became more and more a drama of ideas, sometimes veiled in the main action, sometimes didactically set forth. These ideas were for the most part revolutionary, so that the drama came to form an advanced battleground for a rising school of young thinkers. Revolt took the form of reaction against past literary models, to current social conventions, and to the prevailing morality of Victorian England. We thus find that sex and the problems of sex occupy by far the greatest place in the new drama, sharing their position only with the problems of labour and the problems of youth. For the new dramatists parental authority represented Victorianism and outworn ideals; romantic love represented the sentimentalism which they were fighting against; capitalism represented the social state which they were bent on altering. The spirit of youth, liberated, eager to strike out on new paths, breathes in many of these plays. Young men struggle to throw off the trammels of Victorian prejudice; young women join eagerly the Feminist movement and glory in a new-found liberty. Constantly questing, constantly restless and dissatisfied, seem the characters of these plays, especially when they are considered by the side of their predecessors, the placid heroes and clinging heroines of romantic drama. Romantic love, too, came in for its particular onslaughts. New investigations into the meaning of sex, which gave to the nineteenth century the philosophy of Schopenhauer and to the twentieth that of Freud, brought men to believe no more in love, as it was expressed by their forefathers, but in what Mr Bernard Shaw has styled the life force. With the sundering of those veils of prudery with which the Victorian era had clothed the facts of sex, the new dramatists came to take a definitely scientific view of life. Social convention, common standards of existence, seemed as nothing compared with this tremendous fact; Ann tracks down the father of her children in *Man and Superman*, and her sister, Ann Leete, in Mr Granville Barker's play, throws over Lord John Carp

for the plebeian John Abud. Mightily the dramatists loved to make Life and Nature play their great parts on the stage. The desire for liberty in domestic and in moral circles is paralleled by the desire for liberty in social life. Suddenly the playwrights became aware of the depressing circumstances in which the poor are fated to dwell, they viewed the squalor and the misery of the cities; they looked around and saw the terror of modern civilization. The class-war, which has found its expression in actual life, was freely dealt with by the newer school, cynically yet profoundly by men such as Mr Bernard Shaw, seriously by men such as Mr Galsworthy.

Being a drama of ideas, the modern theatre tended to become more static. The necessity of expressing in the three hours' traffic of the stage a multitude of diverse theories and points of view seriously interfered with the action of many plays. Inner conflict was substituted for outer conflict, and drama became quieter than had been the swashbuckling romantic theatre of previous years. This development, as has been hinted above, was a normal one, and but betokens the gradual progress by which the drama kept abreast of changing conditions. This inner quality of the modern theatre was intensified greatly by the recent investigations of psychologists. The new study of the 'soul' interested many, and none more than the dramatists. In their plays, therefore, they sought ever more subtly and delicately to limn the most intricate aspects of the human spirit.

In many ways this inwardness is connected with another marked development in modern dramatic art. To express these almost inexpressible ideas, emotions, instincts, which the psychologists have defined for us, the new writers found that ordinary direct words were insufficient. They found, that is to say, precisely the same difficulty which faced the mystics of countless centuries before, and they employed the same methods for the explaining of their purposes. Where direct enunciation was impossible or unsatisfactory they had recourse to symbolism. This symbolism is exemplified in the present-day theatre in many different

ways. Sometimes it forms merely a suggestion in an otherwise unsymbolic drama; sometimes, as in the plays of Lord Dunsany or in those of Sir James Barrie, it dominates the whole plot and all the characters of a particular work. The element of fear which Lord Dunsany introduces into his weird playlets is achieved rarely by direct means; it is symbolic in essence. The peculiar atmosphere of mystery which characterizes Sir James Barrie's better efforts is secured by the employment of almost spiritualistic devices and by the introduction of symbolism of one sort or another. It may be noted, too, that this symbolism is utilized frequently by the modern dramatists for another purpose—that of attaining a breadth and universality more difficult of achievement in their plays than in the 'royal' dramas of the Elizabethan age. The white horses in *Rosmersholm,* the wild duck in the play of that name, the roaring waters of the Severn tide in Mr Masefield's *Nan,* the waves dashing in ceaseless fury through Synge's *Riders to the Sea,* the bleak expanses of industrial landscape in Miss Sowerby's *Rutherford and Son,* all give unity and universality to the various tragedies in which they appear. Perhaps the dramatists are not fully conscious of the end at which they would aim in introducing these things; but consciously or unconsciously they are employing one of the surest means of raising apparently sordid subject-matter on a higher and truly tragic plane.

With the increased inwardness must be accounted, too, a tendency on the part of some of our living dramatists to make their protagonists not men, but unseen forces. Reference here is not to the ghost-forms who re-enact their fatal story in Mr Masefield's *Melloney Holtspur,* but to the employment of social forces for the purpose of making wider and larger the sphere of drama. More will be said of this in a treatment of Mr Galsworthy's work, but the tendency must be noted here as one of the chief which separates the earlier theatre from the latter.

(ii) Comedy

Turning from the *drame* and tragedy proper to the world of comedy, we find many marked developments in recent years, but none of such a decided originality as those exemplified in more serious drama. Perhaps that which deserves most attention is the revival of the comedy of manners. In many ways we seem now to be approaching a new Augustan period, when reason rather than imagination, common sense rather than romantic nonsense, will dominate life and literature. Notwithstanding the great development of the poetic drama in recent years, it cannot be denied that a definite return is being made to the witty satirical comedy which rose to full flourish with William Congreve in 1700. Oscar Wilde, Mr Henry Arthur Jones, and a number of others aided in the establishment of this form of drama once more, and the recent successes of *The Beggar's Opera* and of *The Way of the World* seem to mark a certain correspondence in the tastes of the public. At times this new comedy of manners is almost purely fanciful and dependent upon wit for its being, but more frequently it assumes a cynical and bitter tone which corresponds in its own way to the social purpose of more serious playwrights. The recently produced play of Mr Maugham's, *Our Betters,* for example, while reflecting the style of the manners comedy, has in its apparently cynical satire a depth and seriousness lacking in the works of the seventeenth century. *The Plain-Dealer,* perhaps is nearest it in general aim and atmosphere. It is perfectly natural that the age should be satiric. Satire will always flourish in a society which has become over-civilized, where the artificial life rendered necessary by city existence has driven men emotionally and morally to depart over-far from elemental conditions and primitive impulses. It is probable that this satire will continue as a marked feature of modern dramatic activity.

No account of modern drama can be complete without a reference to the Shavian comedy. Mr Bernard Shaw is a peculiar admixture of Ibsen and Wycherley. His aim

is as serious, his analysis is as deep, as those of any of the more solemn dramatists, yet he cloaks that seriousness of purpose with a gaiety and a wit which has rarely been equalled in any time. We may call Mr Shaw's plays comedies of purpose. They are as laughable as Congreve's, as stinging as Jonson's, as profound as Ibsen's. No sentimentalism is allowed to enter; rather is the whole tendency intellectual and rationalistic. There is no single comedy in English akin to those of Mr Shaw; he has brought to the English stage a type of drama entirely new—a type, however, which few could follow. Unquestionably critics of a hundred years hence will regard his plays as one of the most notable contributions to the theatre in our time, but it is probable that they will find only one or two with whom to compare him. The comedy of purpose, if it is not to drift into mere sentimentalism, demands a genius not only of a high, but of a peculiar order.

A brief summary of the main tendencies noted may close this section. Drama, we have seen, has become in our own age a drama of ideas. The themes of tragedy are normally taken from actual life, and in the majority a problem of social or moral import is presented before the spectator. With this there is to be observed the rise of symbolic elements in the theatre, leading in their extreme form to the tragedies of Mr W. B. Yeats. In comedy a revival of the manners style and a plentiful employment of satire mark the best works of the present century, and Mr Bernard Shaw has introduced what is virtually a new type of drama in his long series of realistically fanciful plays.

CHAPTER IV

DOMESTIC TRAGEDY AND THE PROBLEM PLAY

T. W. Robertson

EVEN had Ibsen not come to teach men his new technique and his new ideals, the drama in England would have arisen out of the romantic and artificial rut into which it had fallen. Already in 1865 there were distinct signs of an awakening when T. W. Robertson produced his first important comedy, *Society,* but London had to wait eight years after that before Sir Edmund Gosse first heralded Ibsen's genius in *The Fortnightly Review,* and had to wait even longer for the earliest translations of that dramatist. Any account of modern drama must include Robertson's name, and even although he kept himself to the sphere of comedy he must head the list of those who strove to introduce serious thought and actual living types into the theatre. To-day Robertson is regarded as out of date, and certainly when we read or witness *Society* (1865), or *Ours* (1866), or *Caste* (1867), or any of the other half-dozen of Robertson's laconically titled comedies we must feel that we have long passed the stage of gentle satire and of delicate emotionalism which breathes in every one of them. There are in Robertson's plays still some of the old trammels of romantic melodrama. The high-born George D'Alroy is by way of being a sentimental hero, and his marriage with Esther Eccles is wrapped in a halo of somewhat unreal sentimentalism. For all that, Robertson cut adrift from the prevailing atmosphere of his age. He deliberately returned to real life, depicting in his dramas the aristocratic foibles, the follies and vulgarities of the *nouveaux riches,* the vulgarities, different in type but none the less blatant, of the proletariat, and the careless absurdities of those he knew so well, the Bohemians of London. All of these are depicted in the spirit of satire,

The loudness of the profiteer, Mr Chodd, in *Society,* is no more attacked than the meanness and soullessness of Lady Ptarmigant; the brutality of Eccles in *Caste* is not more bitterly exposed than the thoughtless Captain Hawtree and the thoroughly obnoxious Marchioness. Robertson has no particular axe to grind in these plays, for he is no revolutionary. His creed is essentially Victorian; he never tires of informing us that East is East and West is West, that classes never should mingle, that the working man should learn to stay in his appointed place and the *bourgeoisie* have no yearnings to intrude into the often impoverished drawing-rooms and libraries of Aristocrat Castle. In this way Robertson must have been entirely in accord with the sentiments of the larger moiety of his audience; but his satire is none the less present, and he faces, if in no very profound manner, the social problems of his day. It is not what Robertson did that makes him a forerunner of modern drama, but his tentative methods of looking at life. Earlier Victorians were content to leave life out of the theatre. The rumbling growl of proletarian anger they were pleased to forget in witnessing the romantic adventures of a distressed heroine and a noble hero in some medieval surroundings. Robertson showed men that life could be brought into the theatre for the good both of drama and of spectators; that the problems of social existence were clamouring for expression in literary form. In style, too, Robertson struck a new note. A performance of *Caste* at the present day may seem at times somewhat stilted. There are occasional lapses into an artificiality of dialogue which savours of eighteenth-century sentimentalism, but for the most part the language is free and natural. Our feelings of dissatisfaction arise only from the fact that we have improved still further on Robertson's style. We have ransacked the provincial dialects of England and Ireland, we have studied subtly the possibilities of Cockney speech and the speech of lower middle-class suburbia, for the purposes of the theatre; and we have evolved a form of dramatic dialogue which is absolutely natural. It was Robertson who pointed the way toward

this consummation; the naturalism of his stage conversations comes as a welcome relief after the impossible vaporizings of impossible characters in the romantic melodrama and lifeless comedy of preceding years.

It is somewhat peculiar that Robertson, despite the success accorded to *Society, Caste,* and *School* (1869), seemed to exercise no immediate influence on the theatre of his time. The old styles of drama continued wearisomely to play their principal part in the theatrical world, and no one rose to carry on the work begun by this author of the sixties. At the same time, forces were under way to drive romanticism from the stage. Ibsen was being introduced to English readers by Sir Edmund Gosse and by William Archer, and a new band of playwrights, destined to build the foundations of a new theatre, were rising to maturity. Sir Arthur Wing Pinero's first play, *Two Hundred a Year,* appeared in 1877; Mr Henry Arthur Jones' first, *Only Round the Corner,* in 1878; Sydney Grundy's first, *The Snowball,* in 1879. Within a few years the dramatic world was rubbing its eyes, not with too good a grace, wondering at this awakening after its long afternoon's nap of nearly two hundred years.

(ii) Sir A. W. Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones

Sir Arthur Wing Pinero deservedly holds one of the chief positions in the world of what we may style pre-modern drama. His place has been taken by other playwrights more revolutionary than he, but his influence on the dramatists of the eighteen-nineties was enormous, and is still exercised on more than one present-day writer. Sir Arthur Pinero's work is of a very varied quality and style. His theatrical efforts are numerous, extending from his first farce of 1877 to the fanciful *Enchanted Cottage* of 1922. Among his forty odd plays there are a number of adaptations, such as *The Iron Master* (1884), taken from Ohnet's *Le Maître de Forges;* there are, too, lighter pieces, such as the farces with which he started his career, and the comic opera, written in collaboration with J. Comyns Carr,

The Beauty Stone (1898). He has pure comedies, such as *The Magistrate* (1885), and sentimental fantasies, such as *Sweet Lavender* (1888). These, however, are not the works which entitle him to a prominent place in this section. With *The Squire* in 1881 he turned to the more serious realm of the *drame,* and approached tragedy in *The Profligate* (written 1887; produced 1889). These were followed by *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* (1893), *The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith* (1895), *Iris* (1901), and *Mid-Channel* (1909).

All of these are alike in dealing with probems of social life in a manner tragic or approaching to the tragic. In style they are marked by the same features which distinguish all the Pinero plays—excellence of construction. It is a fact, however, that in the world of the drama construction may be too excellent. It may rise to such a pitch of perfection that it becomes positively mechanical. French writers such as Sardou, Scribe, and Augier had taught to playwrights the secret of this construction. Dramas were rolled off ceaselessly to a set plan. Character, incidents, exposition, climax, and *dénouement*—all were governed by certain laws, and once the mould was secured plaster-casts could be struck off almost indefinitely. Sir Arthur Pinero, starting his work at the age of twenty-two in 1877, had learned much from this school, and the construction of all his later plays shows its baneful effect. His characters are often 'theatrical' rather than real; his situations have an unnatural atmosphere; the development of his plots bears witness to a somewhat mechanical rigidity. The fetters of the mid-nineteenth century still hinder his free progress toward a more dominant art-form. It is typical of this mechanical structure that *The Profligate* was provided with a double ending, by which the curtain fell either on unmitigated tragedy or on a conventional happy ending where the hero is forgiven and all is well. The vicious taste of late seventeenth-century drama, which influenced Suckling's *Aglaura* and Howard's *The Vestal Virgin,* was not lost even in 1889.

These weaknesses arising out of an excellence of construction which becomes dully mechanical are paralleled

by another notable trait in Sir Arthur Pinero's more serious work. He deals with the stuff of tragedy, but rarely in a tragic manner. To understand this aright we must return for a moment to the question of the *drame*. The *drame*, that form of playwrighting which was invented in the eighteenth century, provides a perfectly novel and legitimate sphere for the dramatist. The *drame* is simply a serious problem play where the emotions never rise to tragic height and where the *dénouement* is in harmony with the general atmosphere of the plot. *Drame* and tragedy can rarely, if ever, be mingled. They are distinct in their separate realms, and a confusion of the two can lead only to disaster. The emotions of tragedy are those primarily of terror and awe, allied to a feeling of pre-eminent majesty. If these be lacking the resultant play will fall into that unhappy ground inhabited by so many of the tragic dramatists of the Augustan period. It cannot be too often insisted that pity and pathos are not genuinely tragic emotions. Both may appear in great tragedies, but then only as a relief to larger and more soul-consuming passions. It is rare that in Sir Arthur Pinero's dramas we meet with those passions. His plays exist mainly on a problem, implied or stated, and on the emotion of pity.

The most notable example of this is the famous *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*. This play deals with a problem of life, the problem of a man (Aubrey Tanqueray) who marries a woman (Paula) whom he loves, but whose past he knows to be deeply stained. The plot is well worked out, with the aid of subsidiary characters such as Ellean, the daughter, and Cayley Drummle, the good-hearted friend, ending with the suicide of the unhappy Paula. Rising to a height of emotional tension in that famous "I'm sorry, Aubrey," it yet fails to stir those deeper passions which the highest tragic art brings to us. The author succeeds in bringing tears to every eye, but the greatest tragedy soars to a lofty expanse where tears are useless, and only dry-eyed fear and awe can dwell. *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* is a well-written play, but it is not a great tragedy. Nor can we style it a *drame*. It fails in the final test, striving at



tragic emotion and succeeding only in the calling forth of pathos.

The Profligate, even despite the unfortunate conclusion, raises something of the same dissatisfaction in our minds. The problem is similar. Dunstan Renshaw has in the past sowed his wild oats freely, and his harvest is reaped when he is faced, the night before his marriage to Leslie, by a woman whom he has deeply wronged. Again there is the same pathetic situation, and again, because neither Laura nor Dunstan are truly great characters capable of that intense nobility which characterizes the highest tragedy, the play sinks to a level below that of the most majestic art.

It is needless, perhaps, to analyse in detail the rather darker *The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith* or *Iris.* These, it is true, are possibly finer in conception, because the development of the respective themes is more in accordance with the spirit of each play. Here the conclusion is not essentially tragic, and there are fewer attempts to secure the tragic atmosphere in character and in plot. The two plays, therefore, along with *Mid-Channel,* belong distinctly to the realm of the *drame,* and are for that reason more of coherent unities, in which the aim and the execution are in harmony one with another.

Whatever failings Sir Arthur Pinero has, however, he must be acclaimed by all as a master of his craft. He is, too, one of the chief figures in the bringing back of drama to more natural realms. He has contributed toward the intimate treatment of life's problems in drama, and toward the introduction of a dialogue vivid and realistic. With him must be associated Mr Henry Arthur Jones, likewise a playwright of diverse styles. Some of the latter's most brilliant plays are comedies of manners, and his greatest success was a melodrama, *The Silver King,* which attained great popularity in 1882. It is, however, his more serious work that claims attention here. That serious work he began with *Breaking a Butterfly* (an adaptation of *A Doll's House*) in 1884, and continued with the original *Saints and Sinners* (1884), the powerful but strange *Michael and his*

Lost Angel (1896), the problem play *Mrs Dane's Defence* (1900), and his more recent work *The Lie* (1914). *Saints and Sinners,* in spite of many essentially melodramatic features, was a more remarkable play in 1884 than *The Profligate* was in 1889. It takes for its sphere the English middle class in a provincial town, introducing as principal characters Hoggard, the ruthless small-business man, and Prabble, the mean little grocer of low mentality and outward godliness. Into this atmosphere comes the figure of Letty, daughter of Pastor Fletcher, and symbolic of ideals and desires above and beyond the sordid environments of Hoggard and Prabble. In its development the drama takes a double course. On the one hand, we are presented with a set of everyday problems, the hatred of the petty shopkeeper at the larger Co-operative Stores, the meaninglessness of conventional Puritanism, the rapacity and poverty of soul in middle-class society. On the other, we are treated to a somewhat melodramatic story in which Letty is betrayed by a high-born villain, one Captain Fanshawe. Letty dies, but not before there is a scene of pathos in which her true lover, George Kingsmill, has returned to breathe his most generous of sentiments. The two moods hardly go together, but they are indicative merely of the fact that in 1884 the drama had not succeeded fully in emancipating itself from the shackles which had lain heavy upon it for nearly a century. The atmosphere of soul-poverty was continued in *Judah* (1890), a much more finely written play, and in *Michael and his Lost Angel* (1896), which the author does not seem to be wrong in regarding as his greatest play. There is here the true stuff of tragic passion, and if the main characters seem too ordinary and uninteresting there is a genuine spirit of greatness in the treatment of the plot. Audrie Lesden is certainly one of the most memorable figures in the sphere of domestic tragedy, although the play is spoilt, as Mr Bernard Shaw in his *Dramatic Opinions and Essays* divined, by the weak-willed character of Michael, who is apparently inconsistent with himself. Instead of the true stuff of tragic drama we approach again the sphere held by so many playwrights

of the eighteen-nineties. *Mrs Dane's Defence* is less of a success, despite the esteem in which it has been, and is still, held. No one can deny that the powerful scene in which Sir Daniel Carteret divines the secret of Mrs Dane's past is a powerful one, full of tension and dramatic interest, but the play as a whole sinks to the levels of artificial sentimentality. Here Mr Jones, striving to imitate Ibsen, has depicted a problem which simply does not exist. Mrs Dane's past contains nothing that is strikingly terrible, although earlier Victorian consciences might have been shocked at her Viennese episode, and there seems no necessity for her sentimental return to her son in the last act and in the pretty touch of Janet's kiss. The play, that is to say, belongs to the eighties of the last century, not to our modern age, and in writing it perhaps the author showed that he had come to be out of touch with the rapidly moving social consciousness of his time.

The social satire enshrined in *Saints and Sinners,* as in Mr Jones' other serious plays, is not entirely confined to his work in tragedy and in the sphere of the *drame.* Purpose breathes through all his productions, and in dealing with his comedies of manners we shall have occasion to note how earnest is his social aim even in his most laughable productions.

It is perhaps a certain step back to chronicle the dramas of Sydney Grundy, who for the most part confined his activity to adaptations from the French. Of his forty plays only some two or three deserve independent mention, but those two or three show that Grundy had a more original mind than one might have guessed from the great bulk of his work. His claim to stand beside Sir Arthur Pinero and Mr Jones, even as a lesser brother, will depend largely upon *A Pair of Spectacles* (1890), taken from *Les Pettis Oiseaux* of Labiche and Delacour, *A Fool's Paradise* (1892), *Sowing the Wind* (1893), and *A Bunch of Violets,* suggested by the *Montjoye* of Octave Feuillet. None of these are great, none of them deserve individual comparison with *Michael and his Lost Angel* or *The Second Mrs Tanqueray;* but they are all symptomatic of the movement

of the age. The first is a commentary upon social affairs, the second a pure domestic tragedy, the third a problem play on the subject of illegitimate children, the last a melodramatic domestic problem drama. All are alike affected by melodramatic touches—by situations impossibly conceived if theatrically effective in a lower way; by characters planned after the manner of the villain-hero-heroine school; by undue sentimentalism; and by lack of organic form. A number of conflicting incidents take from the concentration of *A Fool's Paradise,* and along with the terrible story of the attempted murder of a husband by his wife Grundy saw fit to weave a story which introduces us to a perfectly cut hero, as animate as a tailor's dummy, and a beautiful maiden who smiles through her tears of distress in the last act on discovering that she is a real heiress. Wedding bells and spring flowers mingle with the dull toll of the funeral bell and black *crêpe.*

All of his plays are marred by a similar inconsistency and by a failure to draw character. We can believe neither in the villainy of the wife in *A Fool's Paradise* nor in the loving kindness of the husband. No more can we believe in the sudden transformation of Benjamin Goldfinch, in *A Pair of Spectacles,* from his cheery old optimism to the soured and bitter misanthropy of the middle acts. This latter play is certainly fanciful, and reaches at times the levels of farce; perhaps we ought not to judge it as we would judge the other dramas. At the same time, where we have impossibility of character-drawing we can have no serious drama. Grundy in general may be looked upon as a successor of Scribe and Sardou, of Boucicault and Taylor, rather than as a companion of Sir Arthur Pinero and Mr Jones and Mr Shaw. For him Victorian ideals still held their force as of yore, and all the revolt, the questioning, the extravagance, of the later drama was foreign to him.

It is impossible here to deal with all the many dramatists who gave something to the development of the play of ideas. Men like Mr C. Haddon Chambers, whose work stretches from *One of Them* in 1886 to *The Saving Grace* in 1917, and like Mr H. H. Davies, author of *A Dream of*

Love (1898) and *Outcast* (1914), must here be passed over, not because they did not do something for the theatre, but because there is space only to deal with some of the more outstanding writers. In surveying the dramatic literature of the last thirty or forty years, we note that there are few contemporaries of Sir Arthur Pinero and of Mr Jones; the men who were to carry on their work penned their first plays mainly in the nineties of the nineteenth century and the first years of our own. Of these men there can be no question but that Mr George Bernard Shaw is the chief. Mr Shaw's drama, however, follows a bent of its own, and must be considered in a section other than this. It is, at the same time, to be observed that his trenchant genius has impressed itself deeply upon the age, so that many playwrights whose works otherwise fall into a category quite apart from his own show themselves influenced by his dominant ideas and by his treatment of social life. It is useless, perhaps, to make any distinction among the various dramatists according as they wrote their first plays before or after 1900, and, while we must note that styles were rapidly changing in the twentieth century itself, we need not make any dividing line with the period of the War.

(iii) John Galsworthy

Within the realm of the *drame* and the *bourgeois* tragedy, however, we must draw some sort of a line between the typical work done for the London theatres and the typical work produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. Men like Mr St John Ervine help to bridge the gulf, but there is something in the Irish plays wholly lacking in the English, something which expresses itself in a richly imaginative treatment of the most sordid themes and by a tendency toward what can be called only by the name of mysticism. The English playwrights first may challenge our attention here. Of these dramatists Mr John Galsworthy, Mr Granville Barker, and Mr John Masefield are undoubtedly the most important, the first two for their treatment of domestic and social problems, the last for his attainment of a high

form of problemless domestic tragedy. Mr Galsworthy's dramatic career began only in 1906 with the production of *The Silver Box,* and the style he adumbrated in that play was brought to even greater perfection in *Strife* (1909), *Justice* (1910), *The Pigeon* (1912), *The Eldest Son* (1912), *The Fugitive* (1913), *The Mob* (1914), *The Skin Game* (1920), and *Loyalties* (1922). This list, which omits many lesser works, shows Mr Galsworthy's keen dramatic activity, and when it is remembered that these are among the most unquestioned literary successes of the twentieth century we realize that he is a dominant force in the present-day theatre.

All of his plays exhibit the same features—the omnipresence of a fundamental social problem expressed in a severely natural manner, without straining of situations or exaggeration of final issues; a corresponding naturalism of dialogue, leading at times to an apparent ordinariness; a native kindliness of heart added to the sternness of the true tragic artist; and a complete absence of sentimentalism even when pitiful scenes are introduced. These form the most marked outward features of Mr Galsworthy's realistic theatre, but there is one other quality which is often overlooked by his critics. The very titles of his dramas give a clue to this feature. It is not of Macbeths and Hamlets that Mr Galsworthy writes, not even of Dr Stockmanns or of Nans; his characters are all ordinary, commonplace men and women such as we might meet with every day. Sometimes, indeed, instead of being above they seem to be below the general level of human intellect and of human power. This has led a number of critics to question the force of his tragic appeal. No great hero is presented to us in these plays, they say; therefore our highest passions are not called out as they are summoned irresistibly forth by *King Lear* and *Othello*. These critics seem mistakenly to have stumbled upon what marks out Mr Galsworthy's tragedies as distinctive in their time. Instead of taking as his heroes the men of individualism, he has adopted the faiths, ideals, and forces of modern social life. In this, perhaps, he is but expressing more forcibly than others a

tendency visible everywhere in our life to-day. When Mr Bernard Shaw reduces that old Victorian ideal, Napoleon Buonaparte, to a rather ordinary human being, and displays Cleopatra as a kittenish young scapegrace, he is but doing cynically what Mr Galsworthy would do seriously. The age of hero-worship seems to have passed by. Individualism and the passion for individualism was a Renascence product; to-day, in our highly civilized age, the faith and the class seem to swallow up the personalities who are born, or who throw themselves into this or that movement. We do not now stand aghast at a Napoleon; our terror is aroused by forces which may seem dominated by one single figure, but which we realize are, after all, that one man's invincible master. The class-war which faces us to-day is not the creation of capitalist or communist; it is the creation of twentieth-century social conditions. The power of the law, which at times seems to crush down the unfortunate and the innocent as well as the guilty, is not the work of one man or even of one body of men; it has an existence and an independence all its own. The intangible terror of the mob spirit does not depend on the will of any one individual forming that mob, but upon some unseen presence which transcends and transforms all. In this world of ours we oftentimes question that line of Shakespeare's which gave Sir James Barrie the title for one of his recent plays:

> The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
> But in ourselves, that we are underlings,

and if we do not share Kent's view that

> It is the stars, the stars above us govern our conditions.

we are tempted to believe that civilization has grown so huge, so vast, so majestic, that it crushes mankind miserably beneath it. It is this truth that Mr Galsworthy would teach. The governor and the warders of the prison in *Justice* are not inhuman brutes; the business men are not grasping materialists, callous and hard-hearted; yet these men are the tools of destiny. The pitiful Falder is caught in the toils of a force which transcends all the

characters in the drama; they are not the direct cause of his fate; his fate depends upon society. The place that the tyrant took in ancient days is assumed by an invisible yet omnipresent force of civilization.

This leads us to the question of Mr Galsworthy's tragic appeal. Judged by the standards of Grecian and Elizabethan art his plays are not high tragedies. There is in them no single hero who stands forward as a dominant figure, rising to a loftier height than his fellow-men. But we cannot judge the art of the present day by the standards of the past. That was the error of the pseudo-classical critics of the Augustan period. If we come to essentials we find that Mr Galsworthy's plays do not fall, as Sir Arthur Pinero's fall, into pathos. The author possesses, despite his kindliness of heart, a genuine tragic firmness. We do not feel pity for the fate of Falder so much as we feel awe in contemplating the mighty millstones of Justice, grinding exceeding small, ruthless and fateful in their silent power. The tragic atmosphere dominates the play; tears are useless and vain. The heroes of Mr Galsworthy's dramas are the unseen fates of modern existence, against which we, poor mortals, can but pitifully cry out in moments of desperation and horror.

All of these dramas depend upon a social problem of this sort. *The Silver Box* deals with the old adage that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor. It is not, however, that Jack Barthwick, the happily born thief, is so thoroughly a rascal, as that he finds himself in circumstances over which he has no control. During the police-court scene, when the magistrate tells Jones, the thief of no connexions and no money, that he is "a nuisance to the community," Jack Barthwick leans from his seat and cries, "Dad! that's what you said to me!" Both father and son realize perfectly that Jones is being badly treated, that he and Jack should, in a just society, have received the same punishment; but circumstances will it otherwise. The one is a rich man's son; the other is a nobody. Society, that invisible presence, determines that the rich shall be preferred to the poor. So in *Strife*

Mr Galsworthy does not make either Anthony, director of the company, or Roberts, leader of the workers, a man who governs events. Both, possibly, possess iron wills. They have determined to fight to the bitter end, but they are not individualities as the Shakespearian heroes were. Anthony takes his strength from what may be called the capitalist faith, Roberts takes his from the faith of the rebels. Fundamentally, each is incapable of doing otherwise than he does. This play well illustrates Mr Galsworthy's fine treatment of that tremendous impression of waste which Professor Bradley so ably discerns in the Shakespearian drama All the modern author's tragedies gain poignancy from this impression. *Strife* ends with wasted lives and a settlement the terms of which are precisely the same as those proposed at the beginning of the struggle. In *Justice* we feel the waste implied in Falder's suicide, and the same spirit is trenchantly expressed in *The Mob*. *The Pigeon, The Eldest Son, The Fugitive,* and *Loyalties* are all alike in producing this atmosphere and in making the faiths of man his masters. In *The Pigeon* it is a question of the vagabonds and the poor. In *The Eldest Son* it is the problem of morality as applied to rich and to poor. *The Fugitive* treats of women's position in social life. The spirit of the crowd and idealism dominate *The Mob*. *Loyalties* is a study in racial pride and social convention. In not one of these is a true hero, yet all are full of heroes. In all the tragic impression is sure, because of this sense of superhuman forces and of the waste involved in their clash and conflict. In these ways Mr Galsworthy's drama, true as it is to the finest traditions of tragic art, is fundamentally modern, expressing to this age the spirit of the twentieth century as Shakespeare's tragedies enshrined the spirit of the Renascence. Our study of drama, if it is to teach us anything, must teach us to be prepared to welcome new developments in that art which, above all others, is most sensitive to the ideals of the age in which it is born. To attempt to imitate Shakespearian drama now, in its original form, would be as absurd as to plead for a return to the stage-coach in place of the locomotive. Man wishes for

means of conveyance in all ages; the desire was the same in ancient Egypt as it is to-day, but the means are different. So in tragedy the fundamental passions remain unaltered from century to century, informing the work of Ibsen as they informed the work of Æschylus; only the means which Æschylus used to arouse those passions bear the same relation to the means of Ibsen that a chariot does to an aeroplane. The one is the perfect expression of Grecian life, the other of modern, and, while we may still appreciate the worth of the more ancient, we realize that it will be inadequate to cope with the changed conditions of a modern consciousness. The demands are the same, but circumstances have altered the media and the ideals and the means of expression.

(iv) Granville Barker

The career of Mr H. Granville Barker began somewhat earlier than that of Mr Galsworthy, his first play, *The Weather Hen,* written in collaboration with Berte Thomas, having been produced in 1899. His dramatic output is not so great as that of his contemporary, and includes a number of lesser pieces, of which the delightfully fanciful *Prunella* (1904) written with Mr Laurence Housman, and *The Harlequinade* (1913), written with Mr D. C. Calthrop, are the chief. His greater plays, in which he has most fully expressed his personality and his ideals, number five in all: *The Marrying of Ann Leete* (written 1899; produced 1901), *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905), *Waste* (1907), *The Madras House* (1910), and the more recent *The Secret Life* (1923). These, like most of the best modern plays, concretize a dominant problem of social life. The first is a serious treatment of a theme dealt with amusingly by Mr Bernard Shaw. The life force, of which the latter speaks so often, is enshrined in the hearts of George and Ann Leete, who look with disgust upon the convention and hypocrisy surrounding the social culture of the time. In contrast with them we are introduced to Lady Cottesham, the elder sister, whose marriage of convenience has brought

nothing but misery and soul-barrenness. The two younger people strike out against the domination of convention. George is the first to find a will of his own. Stepping from the highbred, and, let it be said, somewhat vulgar, surroundings in which he has been reared, he actually makes himself a rival to John Abud, the gardener, for the love of Dolly Crowe, a common farmer's girl. He is successful in his wooing, and, in the midst of universal excration, he marries her. Ann, meanwhile, feels the spirit of revolt burning in her breast. She is destined to wed the vacuous Lord John Carp, and it seems as if she will be dragged into a loveless marriage such as will please her father, when suddenly in the queerest way her whole being is illuminated. John Abud comes to bring the news that George's wife has brought a child into the world. What happens nobody can tell, but light flashes into Ann's heart, and, forgetful of the eminently desirable Lord John Carp, forgetful of parental wishes, she scandalizes every one by requesting the gardener to marry her. She has found her mate and she is freed.

This play, as is evident, has about it a touch of fancifulness. At moments we might imagine that we are wandering in the dim-set garden of Prunella's dream-house, but the realistic purpose is evident. In it we find the perfect expression of a certain realistic-fanciful art, difficult of attainment and rarely practised. *The Marrying of Ann Leete* is unlike any of Mr Granville Barker's other plays, which depend essentially on absolute fidelity to nature. In *The Voysey Inheritance* once more we come upon a theme similar to one of Mr Shaw's. *Mrs Warren's Profession* deals fundamentally with the same problem as that which Edward Voysey had to face. He is an idealist, and he hates his father's business and business methods. When the time comes that his father dies, and he is left with an inheritance which seems to him little else than misery, he is confronted with much the same difficulty as that which confronted Vivie Warren. He would rather go to prison than continue the sham. Mr Granville Barker's play emphasizes—not with one mighty sledge-hammer stroke,

but by a series of mallet-tappings—the sense of crushing, belittling imprisonment which he, along with other dramatists, feels in present-day life, the seeming futility of higher ideals, the desire for freedom, the passionate spirit of revolt. The answer which he gives to his problem, however, takes the form of a compromise. Beatrice Voysey has battled out her own way to seeming liberty and has succeeded only in hardening her feeling, in making coarse her inner nature. In the struggle her soul has been seared as if society had sought to take vengeance upon her and had branded her with the brand of Cain. Obviously the author's real sentiments are given to Alice Maitland, who, standing beside and comforting the broken Edward Voysey, pleads for no extreme course. She sees as plainly as the others the misery and the squalor and the crass barrenness around, but, unlike the rest, she sees, clear-sightedly, that society will take its toll of any who strive too ardently against it, that in this civilization of ours it is our only way to rest content under many of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The solution, therefore, while it is not definitely unhappy, has about it something of the despair of tragic art.

In *Waste,* perhaps, Mr Granville Barker draws nearest to Mr Galsworthy. The problem is here one of sex, such as dominates the whole of modern drama, and which already its author had introduced as the main theme in his *Marrying of Ann Leete* and as a subsidiary motive in *The Voysey Inheritance.* It is that of the woman with no motherly instincts faced by the philoprogenitive man. Fascinated by the outward beauty of Amy O'Connell, Henry Trebell, a brilliant young politician, falls in love with her. She is to have a child, but, unable to face the duties of motherhood, seeks illicitly to destroy it. The operation proves fatal both to herself and her unborn baby. Meanwhile, her action brings disaster to Trebell. He is on the eve of great political advancement, but Amy's folly causes him to be politically ostracized. He is faced by cold looks, and his advance is stopped. The loss of the child of whom he had thought so much, and the blow to

his political career, prove fatal to him. He sinks into despondency and despair, and in a moment of extreme misery commits suicide. The tragedy as a whole is full of the most impenetrable gloom; hardly a ray of hope serves to irradiate the darkness of the life depicted. While in some ways the work is akin to Mr Galsworthy's art, in many others it is wholly antagonistic to it. Mr Galsworthy has little interest in sex themes as such; and in this play there is little or no appearance of these social forces which Mr Galsworthy made his heroes. The play fundamentally is a domestic tragedy with Trebell as an individual hero. It is he who dominates the entirety of the work; it is he, with his vast powers thwarted by fate, who gives majesty to the tragic conception. Here, if anywhere, we have in modern dramatic art a return to the Shakespearian type.

The Madras House returns rather to the problem of social forces. It is a much more complex play than any of the others, involving a greater number of prominent types in its folds. The Huxtable household at Denmark Hill introduces us to the slightly rebellious Julia and Jane, the more rebellious Philip, the conventional Mrs Huxtable, the miserable Mrs Madras, and the socially impossible Constantine. Nor is this the only field of action. Another sphere of interest surrounds the firm of Roberts and Huxtable with its prim Miss Chancellors and its rebellious Miss Yates, typical of a whole world of life independent of Denmark Hill, yet fatally linked to it. "Depressing," the ordinary unthinking man in the street would say on witnessing this play, but that would only be because the ordinary man in the street finds that his imagination cannot be aroused even by the force of art. *The Madras House,* along with *The Voysey Inheritance,* is a damning indictment of certain spheres of modern life, and the indictment should, as Mr Granville Barker wishes, cause us to think and ponder. In reality, however, the individuality of a single man can do nothing. The free independence of a Constantine Madras may win for its possessor a certain modified liberty, but that liberty, after all, is selfish. The higher idealism of a Philip can do naught against the deeply entrenched

and heavily fortified forces of social custom and of social prejudice. Here a certain atmosphere as of Mr Galsworthy's invisible presences comes to tinge the drama with its darkened shapes.

Mr Granville Barker's theatre is a thing of its own, yet bound by many ties to the dramas of his contemporaries. He is probably a greater delineator of character than any of those with whom we have just dealt, and he has carried the realistic style to the utmost bounds of perfection. His plays seem, even more so than those of Mr Galsworthy, to be excerpts from life. The curtain rises, and we seem to be actually and not fictionally in the drawing-rooms of upper middle-class society. The dialogue is the dialogue of ordinary men, the native brilliance of Mr Granville Barker's style being restrained so that the naturalistic effect may be the greater. This produces a powerful atmosphere of its own; no man has succeeded better in reproducing in dramatic form that crushing littleness which dominated so many English homes in the nineties of the last century and which still, in those dismal realms called suburbia, exercises its baneful effect upon the many miserable beings cabined and confined in a prison which Edward Voysey saw was worse than Wormwood Scrubs.

(v) John Masefield

The third great dramatist of the domestic school whose name was mentioned at the beginning of this section is Mr John Masefield, creator of *The Daffodil Fields* and of *Reynard the Fox*. Mr Masefield's plays number fifteen in all, and include not only *The Tragedy of Nan* (1908) and *Melloney Holtspur* (1923), but also poetic fantasia and almost classical decorum (as in *Esther* and *Berenice*, both 1921, adapted from the famous seventeenth-century tragedies of Racine). It is *The Tragedy of Nan*, however, that stands out chief among his dramatic works, sharing as it does to the greatest extent the chief qualities of its author's creative genius. Mr Masefield holds a peculiar position in the history of literary art. Gifted with a high

imagination, he is by spirit sternly classical; endowed with passion, no man is more clear-sighted and logical than he; full of the fantasy of the poetic genius, he is a confirmed realist; clinging tensely to the natural world, he is wrapped in the spirit of mysticism. All of these apparently conflicting qualities, moulded into one homogeneity by his creative genius, are traceable in *The Tragedy of Nan.* The story is one of unflinching realism. All the cold atmosphere of a rustic setting is wrought into its scenes. Nan herself is the child of a man who, before the action of the play begins, has been hanged for stealing a sheep. Stained with this disgrace, she lives, a veritable outcast, in the house of her uncle, Pargetter. Slowly, yet with resistless force, the tragic story develops. Nan gives her heart to Dick Gurvil, who, being a selfish, sensual creature, is easily led away from her by Mrs Pargetter. Broken, Nan stands lonely as a truly tragic figure, companioned only in spirit by the half-mad old Gaffer, whose peculiarly beautiful meanderings add a touch of high passion to the theme. Listening to him, Nan's soul becomes wrapt in the melody of thoughts high above the wearisome weakness of Pargetter, the cruel tyranny of his wife, and the fickle, passion-bereft egoism of her former lover. Life somehow takes an added beauty out of her despair, and the roaring of the Severn waters sounds like that music of the spheres of which all earthly music and all earthly passion are but dim echoes, taking their form and substance from something more vast and more universal than themselves. Nothing in modern literature quite equals the tremendous scene when Nan, her spirit broken yet victorious, gives ear to the lonely, heart-dulled wanderings of the Gaffer:

> *Gaffer.* The salmon-fishers'll lose their nets to-night. The tide'll sweep them away. O, I've know it. It takes the nets up miles. Miles. They find 'em high up. Beyond Glorster. Beyond 'Artpury. Girt golden flay-flowers over 'em. And apple-trees a-growin' over 'em. Apples of red and apples of gold. They fall into the water. The water be still there, where the apples fall. The nets 'ave apples in them.
>
> *Nan.* And fish, gaffer?
>
> *Gaffer.* Strange fish. Strange fish out of the sea.

Nan. Yes. Strange fish indeed, gaffer. A strange fish in the nets to-morrow. A dumb thing. Knocking agen the bridges. Something white. Something white in the water. . . .

The restraint and the imaginative passion of Mr Masefield's genius are well-nigh perfect.

In *The Tragedy of Nan* Mr Masefield has created the greatest modern example of that form of domestic tragedy which found its first masterpiece in Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. There is here little employment of social purpose. The play certainly gains an added grandeur by its use of heredity as a fatal force, consuming children's lives for the sins of their parents, but fundamentally it is a drama of domestic life and character. It takes its chief majesty from the *dramatis personæ* introduced into it. Perhaps the figure of the Gaffer and the many passages of purely poetic utterance point to the fact that every masterpiece of this kind of domestic tragedy must introduce something of a supernatural and imaginative cast. Unless this be done the ordinary nature of the theme chosen will lead toward a merely sordid note. In high tragedy we require to be raised out of the world in which we spend our days into a realm of clearer imagination, of nobler passion, of more poetic experience.

Periodically, during his varied career as a playwright, Mr Masefield has returned to domestic drama, unfortunately not with the rich inspiration which fired *The Tragedy of Nan*. *The Campden Wonder* (1907) and *Mrs Harrison* (written 1906) are both unrelieved *bourgeois* tragedies, but neither has a spark of that light which irradiated the greater play. *Melloney Holtspur* is more of a *drame*, and to a certain extent is weakened by the direct introduction of supernatural forces. The belief in spiritualism, fervently preached by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and by Professor Sir Oliver Lodge, found a certain home in the hearts of many people during and after the Great War years, and that belief has been reflected in more than one play of recent times. In introducing their spirit forces, however, the dramatists have often forgotten that art, particularly that form of art which deals with the supernatural world, is

successful only in so far as it is suggestive. No ghost ever succeeded in raising so much of that "willing suspension of disbelief" which is the true end and aim of this art as an allusion or delicate hint at supermundane forces has done. Frankly, few can believe in the ghost-forms of Melloney Holtspur and Lonny, her faithless lover. The human, earthly story unfolds itself excellently, and we are shown the almost tragic passion of Lenda Copshrews and of Bunny Mento with intense power. When the scene changes to previous times, however, and when Melloney Holtspur, leaning, like Rossetti's blessed damozel, out of the bars of her spirit world, gives her blessing to their love, we cease to believe in the reality of the picture. It must be confessed that the author has succeeded marvellously in the technical welding together of the two worlds, and has, in doing so, given many suggestions to playwrights of the future, but somehow even the most powerful imagination cannot conceive the possibility of a live Mrs Copshrews re-enacting, along with a couple of ghosts, her tragic story. *Melloney Holtspur* is a peculiarly entrancing play, full of subtle symbolism and deep thought. Technically it is magnificently developed. At the same time, it cannot be held to be one of the greatest dramas of our century. Mr Masefield's masterpiece still is *The Tragedy of Nan.*

(vi.) St John Hankin and others

Many other dramatists of recent years have taken up as their province Sir Arthur Pinero's pathetic drama, Mr Jones' harder problem play, the tragedy of social forces elaborated by Mr Galsworthy, the realistic drama of Mr Granville Barker, or the poignant domestic tragedy of Mr Masefield. Among these one of the chief is St John E. C. Hankin, whose death occurred in 1909. *The Two Mr Wetherbys* (1903), *The Return of the Prodigal* (1905), *The Cassilis Engagement* (1907), and *The Last of the De Mullins* (1908) will always entitle him to fame as a writer of the serious play. Hankin, like most of his contemporaries, was a dramatist of ideas. All his plays throw

a searching light upon the society of his age, and from his ideas his characters and incidents spring. This it is which causes a certain flaw in his art. Hankin knows human nature in the mass, but he cannot divine the true inner workings of the human heart. His stage figures, therefore, seem to us rather invented than felt. This impression is strengthened by the failure of the author in regard to emotion. He always remains somewhat cynically aloof, an attitude which forms an interesting contrast to the stern-eyed kindliness of Mr Galsworthy. In general, we may say that all of Hankin's plays, well constructed as they are in the main, lack naturalism. They appear to us somewhat artificial in dialogue and in character-delineation, as if the writer were thinking more of the stage than of truth to reality. Whatever detailed portraits he introduces of English life, we feel that he has in some way or another falsified those portraits in his straining after effect.

Hankin's chief merits lie in his amusing cynicism, which reveals itself in a manner not similar but analogous to that of Mr Bernard Shaw. How delightful is the topsy-turvydom of *The Two Mr Wetherbys,* where James Wetherby, conventional and striving to be attached to his wife when their whole lives lie apart, is faced with the problem of persuading that wife to stay with him, and where Richard Wetherby, who has broken from his matrimonial ties, is embarrassed by his wife's desire to return to him. The same cynicism is apparent, too, in *The Return of the Prodigal,* in which the rascal who has squandered his patrimony in Australia proves to his horrified father and jealous, if justifiably indignant, brother that he has a right to be maintained by them, and goes off in triumph with his two hundred and fifty a year. In *The Cassilis Engagement* we are nearer the sphere of the *drame,* although again the cynicism brings the play rather into the category of comic drama. The story is one of caste. Young Geoffrey Cassilis has got engaged to a frivolous adventuress named Ethel Borridge. His mother, horrified, plans to break off the engagement, but, knowing that opposition will but forge the bonds tighter, she invites Mrs Borridge and

Ethel to her house in the country. There Mrs Borridge's vulgarity becomes apparent, and Ethel, bored to death by the rural life, herself casts Geoffrey off. Nowhere is Hankin's lack of sympathy and satirical bent more clearly displayed. His lash falls on all. If Mrs Borridge is vulgar and self-seeking, Mrs Cassilis is snobbish and deceitful; if Ethel is shallow and trivial, Geoffrey is a fool. Hankin's world is a world of social vices unrelieved by the presence of any virtues.

This cynicism, however, was to a certain extent dissipated in his last complete play, *The Last of the De Mullins,* another drama on the theme of caste and convention. Once more we are introduced to what is dealt with by so many of our modern dramatists, the belittling and soul-destroying forces of social tradition. They are revealed here in the house of the De Mullins, where Hester lives a life of unmitigated mental depression. So, too, we are confronted with the spirit of revolt, incarnated in Janet, who has gone out to earn her own living and who is guilty of bearing an illegitimate child. Here the moral is not, as with Mr Granville Barker, that the struggle for liberty sears the soul, for Janet is not a Beatrice. She has won her independence, having paid deeply for it, no doubt, in many privations and in many heart-burnings, but content and glad that she has cast off the fetters which she sees only too clearly binding the soul of her sister. This drama contains less of the omnipresent cynicism of Hankin's other work, but even here it is present in the portrait of Janet. Among the twentieth-century dramatists Hankin will always take a prominent place, but his lack of human sympathy will ever put him on a lower plane than those other playwrights with whose work we have just been dealing.

The depressing existence of the middle classes has been treated by other dramatists. Of these one of the most penetrating in the analysis of social conditions has proved to be Miss Elizabeth Baker (Mrs J. E. Allaway), whose *Chains* appeared in 1909. *Chains* is a tragedy of London suburbia, behind the all-consuming misery of whose walls

burns the fire of liberty and the desire for self-expression. In the play we are led into the little house of Charley Wilson, inhabited by himself, his moderately contented because unimaginative wife Lily, and a lodger, one Tennant. The last-mentioned, weary of London life, is about to sail for Australia, and his small belongings lie ready packed for his departure on the morrow. Suddenly, and without his being fully conscious of it himself, young Wilson finds himself dissatisfied with his surroundings. London seems to be fettering him, and he would snap the chains round him in order to escape. A wild spirit of revolt surges through his being. After a period of arguing and questioning he decides to depart with Tennant. Plans are arranged, and all seems well, when it is discovered that Lily, his wife, is to bear him a child. The gates of freedom are closed, and there remains only the prospect of the "old grey solitary nothingness," the drab surroundings and the continual daily grind at the dingy office-desk. Here once more we come upon a Galsworthian drama, one to which not the characters, but the circumstances and the forces of society give greatness. Poor as the characters are, moreover, when considered in the light of great ideals and high purpose, they are subtly portrayed, and the contrast between the quietly contented soullessness of Lily and the incipient imagination of her husband is delicately handled. We are here in the presence of life not as expressed by an Œdipus or an Othello, but by London commercialism and suburban drabness and convention.

This drama of *Chains* was followed by its authoress with a number of more trivial pieces, among them *Cupid in Clapham* (1910) and *Edith* (1912); the note of dramatic intensity was not struck again until the appearance of *The Price of Thomas Scott* (1913), a play originally produced at Manchester. This second experiment in the realm of the domestic drama, although introducing stronger characters, is hardly so fine in its atmosphere as Miss Baker's first play. It seems to deal almost exclusively with the barren in life, introducing for us no escape from the drab and the sordid. Thomas Scott himself, puritanical fanatic, is a fine figure,

and his dilemma when he finds that he has sold his property to what he hates most, a company financing a dancing-hall, is powerfully delineated. The conclusion of the drama, too, rises to a height of intensity, when the hard idealist flings back what he regards as tainted money, the money of sin. *The Price of Thomas Scott* seems rather depressing, more depressing than *Chains,* even in spite of the thwarted ambitions and the unrelieved middle-class misery of the latter play. No drama of the finer sort can be without some element of hope and of larger life, and somehow this last story of hardness and fanaticism fails to give it to us.

The domestic problem play, veering to the sphere of tragedy, has been adopted by several other women writers besides Miss Baker. Miss Clemence Dane recently gave us, in addition to her much discussed, much vilified, but well-wrought *William Shakespeare* (1912), a study of domestic questions in *A Bill of Divorcement* (1921), and Miss K. Githa Sowerby (Mrs John Kendall) won a deserved literary success in her first play, *Rutherford and Son* (1912). The story here is again one of industrialism and hardness of heart. The glass factory which he has built up is John Rutherford's only love. His whole life is centred in that, and no human tenderness can break down the iron barriers which he has placed on his sympathy and emotions. His sons drift away from him. He can understand neither the clergyman Richard nor the weak-willed John. Janet, his daughter, seems to him also a being apart, and when she stoops to marry Martin, the foreman at the works, his anger blazes forth, and she is sent from his house. Only in the end is his pride humbled and his heart softened just a trifle. To him comes the deserted wife of his son, Mary, a being of sensitive feelings and acute intellect. She lays before the old man his own grandchild, who may one day take his place as master of the factory. Broken by his own loneliness, perhaps, unconscious though he be of it, yearning for some human sympathy, he takes Mary back as his daughter, and the play is ended by the cry of a child. Bleakness, barrenness, hardness, dominate this drama; misery surrounds the seeming prosperity of the Rutherford

home. Civilization has exacted a cruel toll from its own creators. It is this sense of the forces of social life, added to the grim majesty of John Rutherford, which gives this play its intensity. It is unquestionably one of the finest of those many dramas which deal with the depressing conditions of modern life. A broader spirit breathes from it, and its creator has succeeded in adding to that broader spirit by the employment of the Northern landscape to form a symbolic background for the human actors who play their miserable or noble parts in the development of the action.

Among the pre-War dramatists who took up this style none is more noticeable than Stanley Houghton, author of a number of fine comedies as well as of *The Younger Generation* (1910) and *Hindle Wakes* (1912). Like *The Price of Thomas Scott,* the first of these latter plays is a study of the soul-deadening effects of puritanism, although the picture is not painted in such hard colours as is that of Miss Baker's play. The theme is treated rather in a cynical than in a tragic manner. Kennion, the father, has not the stuff in him which makes a Thomas Scott. He is a well-meaning parent, full of the puritanical views of his class, but neither stern nor entirely lacking in sympathy. All sort of excess, however, he regards as savouring of sin, and he has a quite definite moral code of his own, which he wishes to be followed by his children, but against which they one and all rebel. It is perfectly natural that he should be horrified when Arthur comes rolling back home one evening in a state of drunkenness, insisting, in the confusion of his spirits, on kissing Maggie, the maid. The climax of the play comes when Kennion himself is forced to lie concerning his own youthful misdemeanours. It is the case of the pot and the kettle over again, told in terms of middle-class English life. As a whole, the play fails because of a discrepancy between aim and means. The theme is a serious one, and many portions border on the realm of that type of *drame* which in its turn is near to tragedy, but the situations become at times almost farcical, and a cynical mood pervades the entirety of the play. If

Kennion himself is a man lacking in sympathy for the desires, which he regards as the sins, of youth, Arthur, his rebellious son, is a sufficiently weak-minded creature, and Richard, his brother, is nothing but a flabby clerk desirous of something beyond the ordinary routine of a city office. The play therefore falls between the serious *drame* and comedy, so that we feel a certain dissatisfaction in reading or witnessing it. Once more we reach the old problem of the mixing of the 'kinds' of literature. Houghton's play deals with two distinct worlds, and he was not such a genius that he could fuse those two together into a novel whole.

Much finer, because cast more in one dominating and all-pervading mood, is *Hindle Wakes,* which deals with the question of youthful revolt from another angle. The problem arises from the fact that Alan Jeffcote, son of a hard-working, honourable factory owner, spends a week-end at a sea-coast town with Fanny Hawthorn, a girl brought up in comfortable but uninspiring surroundings. He, being a luxurious young idler, looks upon the escapade as a 'lark'; so does she, with the difference that it is for her a gesture of revolution. She has dared to break the rigid fetters of a conventional morality, and is free. The climax of the drama lies in the consequences of this. Both the parents of the girl and the parents of the man agree that the two must marry, and Alan, a marrowless creature, is brought to comply. Fanny, however, to the horror of every one, refuses point-blank. Alan is not the man she would choose. The play ends in a set of cross-purposes and an unsolved problem. Obviously Fanny is of the modern age, a sister of some of Mr Shaw's heroines, eager for independence of thought and of action. She is the spirit of the twentieth century striving to fight out a way against the traditions of the nineteenth. She is of the kin of Magda in Sudermann's *Die Heimat,* of Mrs Arbuthnot in Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance,* and of Freda in Mr Galsworthy's *The Eldest Son.* In spite of a clear exposition and a capable development of the action in *Hindle Wakes,* Houghton's drama fails as *The Younger Generation*

failed. There is something of a sordidness in his work, mingled with cynicism, and both serve to leave spectators dissatisfied. Efficient playwright though he is, he does not succeed in reaching the higher levels of dramatic utterance.

More effectively, although with less of atmosphere, Mr Arnold Bennett has approached the problem play in *Milestones* (1912). The treatment of this drama is novel, and the problem dealt with is a serious one. The gradual progress from generation to generation with the retention of the same prejudices and the same emotions, even when expressed in widely different terms, is delineated with a sure touch worthy of the author of *The Old Wives' Tale* and the *Clayhanger* series. Mr Harold Brighouse, another novelist who is also a dramatist, has provided for the theatre a number of excellently portrayed Lancashire themes, although rarely has he reached the intensity of his early playlet, *The Price of Coal* (1909); and Mr St John Ervine has won deserved fame for his Belfast plays, in which he has striven to reveal in an artistic manner some of the sterner aspects of the Puritan conscience.

(vii) St John Ervine

Mr St John Ervine is among the greatest of these playwrights. His method is strictly realistic, but he achieves that higher note which is frequently lacking in the dramas of the others. Like Houghton he loves to deal with the hard conventions of a narrow society, loves to deal, also, with that perverted idealism which gave dignity to Miss Baker's work. Often, too, he includes with these things the forces of the present-day class-war, which cut across and confuse many of the older prejudices. Thus in *Mixed Marriage* (1911) he takes as his theme both the struggle of Catholic and Protestant and the struggle of master and labourer. John Rainey, the hero of the work, speaks in favour of a strike which he knows is largely engineered by Catholics, but finds his old Orange sympathies return to him intensified when he learns that his own son, Hugh,

is engaged to a Catholic girl, Nora Murray. From this point the action of the play grows tense. Civil discord soon breaks out, soldiers are called in, and Nora falls, killed by a stray bullet. Perhaps part of the last act may appear somewhat melodramatic, but the *dénouement* is logically arrived at. The hatred of the Protestants and the hatred of the Catholics, confused and sometimes intensified by that class-war which is coming to assume ever greater and greater proportions in social life, give the background to a tragedy of human passions and succeed in raising these passions to a high level. The last words of Rainey, as he stands contemplating the ruin about him, have something of the same majestic grandeur which is enshrined in the old father of Hebbel's *Maria Magdalena*.

A still greater success was won by Mr Ervine in *Jane Clegg* (1913), a drama which once more deals with the depressing and soul-destroying aspects of lower middle-class life. A whole world of miserable creatures is presented to us, from the vicious and weak-willed husband and his evil genius Munce, the 'bookie,' to the monotonous and tiresome old grandmother. As a drama the whole would have seemed too sordid and too depressing were it not for the figure of Jane Clegg herself. Borne down in many ways into the mire that surrounds her, she rises superior to her circumstances, a human soul filled with that divine fire which irradiates and consumes. No idle dreamer of things impossible, no fettered woman craving for independence and adventure, she is a stern realist, staring life full in the face and rising to the heights of her moral nature in the presence of disaster. She watches her husband's fall; she looks through him and sees the meanness and the littleness of his character; and, in doing so, she comes to realize her duty. In sending this weak, depraved, cringing creature from her house she is doing the only thing possible. In that moment she becomes truly tragic in her inner majesty.

With equal dramatic force Mr Ervine has painted for us the tragedy of *John Ferguson* (1915), another tale of middle-class life. The hero is a man hard, yet with a human

understanding and a depth of sympathy in his nature. To save his daughter, Hannah, from a loveless marriage with James Cæsar he allows his farm to be taken from him. The strain is tremendous, but he rises superior to it, winning new strength from his losing yet victorious battle against fate. Meanwhile, fresh misery has come upon him. His own daughter has been seduced by his greatest enemy. Cæsar, weak though he is, plucks up courage to say that he will murder the villain, and goes out one night gun in hand for that purpose. In the morning he comes back, frightened and cringing, crying out that his will failed him in the darkness. But the seducer has been found murdered, and Cæsar is arrested. Money has come from Hannah's brother in America, and it seems as if, in spite of the terror of the preceding days, peace of a sort will come to John Ferguson's troubled spirit, when his own son Andrew, who had kept silence hitherto, suddenly announces that it was he who had killed Witherow, that he could not allow the innocent Cæsar to go to his death for him. Ferguson, after a moment of terrible doubt, understands him, and Hannah and Andrew pass out into the open bound on the terrible mission of confession.

There is the same strength in this play as there is in *Jane Clegg*. John Ferguson is a wonderful creation, a tower of strength, rude though he be, a man against whom the waves of fate may batter, but whose head remains, though bloody, yet unbowed. When we add to this brilliant portraiture the sense of fate which Mr Ervine has summoned forth by many a subtle touch, we must realize that in this drama we have one of the masterpieces of the domestic drama. There is no problem here; there is no employment of social forces as there had been in *Mixed Marriage;* but *John Ferguson* deserves to be ranked by *The Tragedy of Nan* as one of the outstanding productions in this particular sphere.

It seems unfortunate that these three dramas, powerful and full of a restrained passion, should have been followed by *The Ship* (1922), a play which in no way rises to the level of the others. It may be interesting as an expression

of revolt against the machinery which man has created and which is beginning to be the master of man, but the human characters introduced are not of the stuff from which Jane Clegg and John Ferguson were created. There is more, too, of an obtrusive didacticism in this work, which makes it rather a tract for the times than a drama. Tried by the highest tests it fails. With *Mixed Marriage,* however, *Jane Clegg,* and *John Ferguson* Mr Ervine must stand well in the vanguard of those modern dramatists who have abandoned the world of romance and have striven to give expression to the common sorrows, the common joys, and the common aspirations of life.

The greatness of Mr Ervine's work lies in his creation of stern and dignified characters. Few of his contemporaries can equal him in this, and, as a consequence, many of them rely more on incident and novel situation than on personality. Mr Ervine can afford to introduce the somewhat improbable rape of Hannah because we do not notice this in our awe at the tremendous dignity of John Ferguson, but others, more subtle perhaps in plot-drawing, can take no such risks. Dramatically effective, for example, is the poignant little one-act sketch of Mr J. J. Bell, entitled *Thread o' Scarlet* (printed 1923). The sheer cleverness of this work cannot be denied. The sense of horror in it is wonderfully developed, but somehow we feel that this is 'Grand Guignol' drama, not tragedy. The true aim of tragedy, we have always to remember, is not the arousing of horror, but the arousing of terror and awe. Subtly Butters' guilt is shown to us, the playlet being in many ways a model of dramatic construction, but we are left with a feeling of dissatisfaction. The play is too clever to be real; it is a piece of artistry rather than a work of art. 'Stageyness' of a similar sort is apparent in the works of many other modern dramatists. It is present, in spite of their unquestioned strength, in the works of Mr Gilbert Cannan, and mars the otherwise excellent qualities of Mr Charles McEvoy's *David Ballard* (1907), a realistic study framed largely in the terms of theatrical melodrama. There is a certain suspicion, too, of the same

artificiality in some of the scenes of *Change* (1912), the once widely discussed prize-work of Mr John Oswald Francis. *Change* is another example of what might be styled the 'generations' theme, the theme which had inspired Mr Granville Barker's *The Voysey Inheritance,* Mr Bennett's *Milestones,* and Miss Sowerby's *Rutherford and Son,* as well as foreign plays such as Turgeniev's *Fathers and Sons.*

A straining after novelty, which leads toward a kindred artificiality, is apparent also in Mr B. Macdonald Hastings' interesting drama called *The New Sin* (1912), the new sin being that of living on when one's decease may bring some joy or profit to others. The dialogue in this play is particularly good, and the subject, albeit a trifle *recherché,* is ably handled. Perhaps something of the same defect may be traced in Mr Cosmo Hamilton's *The Blindness of Virtue* (1913), where the question of sex education is freely dealt with. Indeed, there is a danger that the realistic problem drama may suffer from the same defects as those which appear only too plainly in the romantic melodrama of the mid-Victorian period. The style, when first it was introduced, had the advantage of being fresh, but, as it has developed, a certain stereotyped set of conventions has grown up even in what was primarily a drama of revolt, literary as well as social. It has become, that is to say, fatally easy to listen to provincial dialect and write it down, fatally easy to depict in some sort of manner the depressing middle-class conditions of England. Realizing this, dramatists have been forced to seek for new situations and for more surprising turns of plot, making their works, because of this deliberate and conscious search, more and more artificial in atmosphere. Mechanical composition is beginning to infect this modern English realistic drama as it infected the drama of Sardou and of Boucicault.

(viii) Irish Dramatists

So far, in carrying the survey of drama up to the present time, nothing has been said of the remarkable renascence of the theatre in Ireland. Not only was the London stage

itself revivified by the aid of Irish writers, for Oscar Wilde, Mr Bernard Shaw, and Mr St John Ervine all hailed from Erin, but the Abbey Theatre in Dublin produced a series of plays among which are to be numbered some of the true masterpieces of modern European dramatic art. The Irish theatre is in itself but the literary counterpart of that movement which brought Sinn Fein into birth, which gave an air of passionate idealism to the Easter Rebellion of 1916, and which has ended in the establishment of the Saorstat Eireann. The literary and political aspects of this movement cannot be separated. Some of the most promising of the younger writers gave their lives for their country, and Mr W. B. Yeats, leader of the poetic drama, is himself a senator in the new Irish Parliament.

Starting as the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899, the little band of enthusiasts who were determined to make the Irish drama a thing of high culture and of European repute soon moved (in 1903) with the aid of Miss Horniman to the Abbey Theatre, forming there a centre of art such as we have not had in the whole of England. Here Mr Yeats and Synge and Lady Gregory gathered about them a number of gifted authors; here flamed a torchlight of artistic excellence which became the model and the despair of many a writer across the Irish Sea. In form this new drama of Dublin was a development of English drama. The language employed was English, not Gaelic; there were many signs that the writers of it had taken inspiration from the more noted works of our long centuries of London playwriting. In atmosphere, on the other hand, the Irish theatre frequently veered away from the English stage. That imaginative idealism which has always characterized the Celtic races, that love of passionate and dreamy poetry, that only half-ashamed belief in the fairy world, the People of the Mist, all gave a particular tone to the plays produced at the Abbey Theatre. Mr Yeats is a poetic dramatist, and Synge, writing in his peculiarly beautiful and imaginative prose, has little in common with the realistic playwrights of London. The chief account of the development of Irish drama will, therefore, have to be confined to that

section of this book which deals with the poetic and symbolic theatre. At the same time, there were a few who strove to introduce to their own land something of the realistic tone so popular among the English writers. Mr Ervine himself, who has been treated above as an English author, had many of his plays produced in the national theatre of Dublin, and men like Mr Lennox Robinson, Mr T. C. Murray, and Mr Padraic Colum depicted in sternly naturalistic manner the lives and passions and hopes of the Irish peasantry.

Mr Lennox Robinson's plays number nine in all. His first, and in some ways his most characteristic effort, *The Clancy Name,* was produced in 1908; his last plays, *The Round Table* and *Crabbed Youth and Age,* appeared in 1922. *The Clancy Name* is a somewhat bitter story of Irish pride. Mrs Clancy is an embodiment of all that tremendous passion for a family name which has characterized the clans of Scotland and the racial sects of Ireland for immemorial centuries. For her this name is as a religion. To sully it means death. To Mrs Clancy comes the terrible realization that her son is a murderer. He has killed a man in a quarrel. The body lies where no one may find it; but his conscience has been aroused. The deed gnaws into his very soul, and in his agony and distress he determines to own up, to give himself to the police. He is a weak lad, this John Clancy, but his whole being is consumed by horror, and all that his mother can say will not move him from his purpose. It seems that the Clancy name is to be for ever sullied by the exposure of this crime, when John, walking in the street, manages to save a child from a runaway horse and in doing so is himself killed. He dies a hero, and the Clancy name is saved. There is a certain straining of probability in this sudden ending. Runaway horses do not often thus accommodate themselves to murderers prepared to confess and go to the gallows. There is, too, a certain bitterness in the somewhat cynical conclusion, which detracts from the general impression received from the play as a whole. Apart from these things, however, *The Clancy Name* is a fine drama, and the figure of Mrs Clancy has the proportions of a true tragic portraiture.

The Cross Roads (1909) is even more improbable, and here the improbability is not atoned for by tremendous passions and high fervour. The story of Ellen M'Carthy, married to a drunken brute and faced with financial ruin, all because she has given up the love of Brian Connor in her desire to help Ireland, is not truly tragic, and a decided note of artificiality breathes over the entire play. *Harvest* (1910) is another tragedy where probability is strained, and cynical bitterness tends to weaken the impression. The story is one of the evils of education. The teacher Lordan tries to instil into the minds of the Irish youth among whom he is cast some elements of learning and culture. Although he himself believes that he has been successful in his effort, we see that he has only made them dissatisfied with their lot. Instead of a life on the land, free if hard, healthy if toilsome, they pine for the gaiety of city life. Patrick Hurley has drifted away from his own home, grown callous by his contact with civilization. Mary, his sister, has become a prostitute, eager for the good things of life which she could not have from her wages as a typist. Bob Hurley is like Patrick, successful, but callous and hard-hearted. Jack has become a chemist's assistant, unhappily married. Ruin slowly creeps down on the little farm, where once had sounded happy laughter and the music of care-free joys. Lordan remains blissfully unconscious of the results of his teaching. He thinks he has done great things for Mary and Patrick, for Bob and Jack; but the veils are raised for the spectators, so that only misery and hardness of heart are displayed. The thesis of the drama may have some truth in it. It may be, for example, that in isolated instances education of a peasant family has brought ruin and misery, evil and degradation; but we cannot generalize in great drama from the particular to the universal. It is as absurd to argue the completely vicious effects of education from a single failure as it would be to argue that because one railway train crashes with its human freight over an embankment therefore we ought to reprobate the railways and travel from London to Manchester on foot. Great drama constantly cries out for the universal in this way;

nothing that is particular and isolated will satisfy its cravings for the larger and more general truths of humanity. So, too, great serious drama rarely if ever will permit the introduction of bitterness. When we listen to Lordan's words at the close of this play, followed by Bridget's "Amen to that," we feel that the author has been guilty of the same offence of which he was guilty in the last act of *The Clancy Name*. He has allowed cynicism to take the place of a higher, more humane, and kindlier tragic emotion.

These three peasant dramas by Mr. Robinson do not by any means exhaust his full scope. Besides them, and the excellent comedy *The Whiteheaded Boy*, he has penned a series of political dramas dealing with Irish aspirations. The first of these was *The Patriots* (1912), to be followed by *The Dreamers* (1915) and *The Lost Leader* (1918). Of these *The Patriots* and *The Lost Leader* are set in our own time. The former comes nearer to tragic intensity than any of the other dramas we have considered above, but once more Mr Robinson allows his cynical bitterness to mislead him. The story is one of a revolutionary, James Nugent, who in 1893 had been sent to prison for his participation in a political crime. In 1911 he returns, still full of hope, still full of energy, expecting to meet his old friends and share in their aspirations for a liberated Erin. But he meets nothing save coldness and chill greetings. For a time he cannot understand; he will not realize that this is so. He is billed to address a political meeting. Here, he thinks, he will at last be able to feel his heart beating with the old enthusiasm, feel his numbed limbs pulsing with the old life. He arrives at the hall, and there is no one there save the porter. Every one has gone off to see the latest film at the picture-house. The sense of darkness and of despair in the old man's heart is excellently portrayed, but once more the cynical touch is apparent. The porter, tied by duty to the hall, is only too glad to switch off the light and hurry away to the twilight of the films. Cynicism again ruins what might have been a great tragedy. *The Lost Leader* is a more peculiar and at the same time a more subtle play. It deals with the legend that Charles Stewart

Parnell is, or was, still alive, living obscurely in some corner of Ireland. This Irish hero of past days is discovered, or is thought to be discovered, in a mean old innkeeper. The delicate touches by which the "willing suspension of disbelief" is aroused show the extreme talents of Mr Robinson. We do not know whether to believe the words of the old man, roused as out of a trance, or the disavowal of his niece, Mary Lenihan. Then comes the climax. The newly discovered Parnell arranges that a meeting be called on a mountain summit, where he will bring proofs of his identity. Political squabbling breaks out, and in the scuffle the old man is killed by a mis-aimed stroke. A few minutes later there arrive some of Parnell's friends, who can say nothing more than that in the features of Lucius Lenihan they can trace the lineaments of Parnell. Beyond the similarity they can aver nothing. As is evident, there is here again that cynicism which marred *The Clancy Name* as well as the other dramas, and there is, too, the evident artificiality of the plot. None of the characters stands out with vividness before us, save perhaps Lucius Lenihan himself. When we remember, however, that we are never sure whether this is an impostor or the real Parnell it must be apparent that even here there can be no certainty of psychological delineation. The play interests us rather because of its novelty than because of its atmosphere or character-studies.

In *The Dreamers* Mr Robinson turns back to the historical drama, telling of Robert Emmet and his rebellion of the early nineteenth century. Nowhere perhaps so clearly as in this play has been depicted the continual yearning and idealism of the Irish revolutionaries, and although there enter in here some features of cynicism the action does not depend fundamentally upon bitterness. It is a sincere attempt to display the workings of fervent passion for a seemingly hopeless ideal in the midst of actual life. Technically *The Dreamers* is not a good drama, its action being clogged and its characters not sufficiently displayed, but in atmosphere it is one of the finest, if not the finest, of Mr Robinson's works.

Writing after the style of Mr Robinson's earlier plays,

Mr T. C. Murray has provided us with some amazingly poignant realistic studies of Irish peasant life. *The Wheel o' Fortune* appeared in 1909, and was revised as *Sovereign Love* four years later. *Birthright* came out in 1910, *Maurice Harte* in 1912, *Spring* and *The Briery Gap* in 1918, *Aftermath* in 1921. All these plays are alike in taking their strength from careful observation of ordinary existence and from consistent naturalism in plot-development and in language. Fundamentally his comedies differ little from his tragedies; in both the darkness of real life is fully displayed. Thus his first play, a comedy, shows up the misery of mercenary poverty no less than do his more powerful tragedies *Birthright* and *Maurice Harte*. The latter deals with the drama that lies in thwarted ambition and misplaced hopes. Mrs Harte has determined that her son Maurice should become a priest. He is a well-meaning and a brilliant lad, but one by no means fitted for clerical life. In torment of spirit he tries to persuade his mother that he cannot enter the Church, but all her proud spirit is aflame with ambition. Like a harsh shepherd she drives her unwilling son back. Anxious to do his loathed duty, he studies hard, but the mental toil and stress tell on him. His mind gives way under the agony of his seething thoughts, and he is brought back a lunatic. It is a terrible story of striving middle-class life in Ireland, but, because of the manner of treatment, it attains to something of tragic grandeur. *Birthright* is equally fine, although here perhaps there is too much of the sordid and depressing aspects of existence. The story is a simple one, straightforwardly told. Hugh Morrissey, a fine young man, symbol of health and clean thinking, is a trifle out of touch with his rougher father's temperament. We gain the impression at the very beginning of the play that these two will never have anything in common. In the tragedy itself we are presented, therefore, not with a series of fortuitous accidents or incidents, but with the climax in a long tale of opposing natures. Hugh has to go to a hurley match and spend the evening at a dinner. It is not that he is dissipated, but he loves sport, and it is his

duty, as captain of his team, to go there. The merrymaking of the players frightens Bat Morrissey's horse; its leg is broken, and it has to be shot. Still more, a sow requires treatment and attention; Hugh is not there to take his part in the work of the farm, and Bat and his duller son Shane are wearied with toil and watching. Shane has been destined for America; his trunk is standing there ready packed, with his name in bold characters on the label. Angered beyond endurance, the father, in terrible accents, orders Shane to substitute Hugh's name for his own. On his return Hugh finds what has been done. He accuses his brother of plying underhand means to get him away from the farm; the latter retorts that Hugh is drunk and turns from that taunt to throw reviling words upon his own mother. A quarrel soon arises, and in the scuffle Hugh falls dead to the ground. In the simplicity of this drama lies its strength. There is a majesty in it shared by but few of these domestic dramas, and the sense we have that this is but the culmination of long-standing grievances and misunderstandings helps to bring the atmosphere to a requisite tragic height. Mr Murray here proves himself one of the most talented of modern writers.

With Mr Robinson and Mr Murray must be mentioned Mr Padraic Colum, whose first play, *The Kingdom of Youth*, appeared in 1902. As a representative of the realistic playwrights he will be always remembered as the author of *The Broken Soil* (1903; revised as *The Fiddler's House*, 1907), *The Land* (1905), and *Thomas Muskerry* (1910). It has been pointed out by several critics that in *The Fiddler's House* Mr Colum has captured something of Synge's elusive style. An air of imaginative beauty passes over the whole, so that things spiritual and things material seem to meet in a common harmony. At the same time Mr Colum's work is not by any means fanciful. His methods are at bottom as realistic as are those of his two contemporaries mentioned above. In spite of the poetry with which the character of Conn Hourican, the fiddler, is invested, he remains after all a rogue and a vagabond. The drama arises from this man's passion for excitement

and drink. His loved home is the horse-fair, where he can get as drunk as a lord and play his enchanting melodies to a gaping and admiring crowd. For some years his daughter, Marie Hourican, has kept him at home by the sheer strength of her character, but the old man feels once more the call of the tap-room. Marie sorrows, but understands. With hardly a word she brings him his fiddle, the fiddle once known throughout the length and breadth of the country, known even beyond in far-distant towns, and with him she goes off to the 'Feis' at Ardagh. In some ways it is a sorry story, for Marie is a girl of high promise, in love with life and eager for love. Her heart is broken, yet she has found a new sympathy, and she attains, as do so many of the heroes and heroines of high tragedy, an almost resigned calm, a clear-eyed realization of the meaning of life.

The Land has less of the imaginative power visible in *The Fiddler's House*. In structure it is a comedy, yet a comedy full of tragic import, another study in the theme of the old and the new generations. Ellen Douras has felt the call for the city, and with her lover, Matt Cosgar, she sets out for America, leaving almost broken-hearted the old father, Murtagh Cosgar, whose one thought is the land which he has broken and tamed for himself and his own. To the younger generation the land makes no appeal; their hearts are set on gay cities and the busy hum of men. The lonely cry of the curlew, the circling flight of the plover, the lowing of the cattle at eventime, mean nothing to them. What they will find remains unknown; but, after all, it is the unknown which tempts men, sometimes to success, more often to self-willed destruction. The song of the syrens is still with us, though Odysseus be many centuries dead.

In *Thomas Muskerry* Mr Colum has introduced another Conn Hourican in the person of the blind piper, Myles Gorman, and with the introduction of that character he has caught again something of the poetic imaginative essence of *The Fiddler's House*. The story itself is one of almost unrelieved misery, telling how the brutal and hard-hearted Thomas Muskerry dies on a pauper's bed, and is buried

in a pauper's grave; but the piping of old Myles brings a note of poetry into the play. As we listen to his melodies we enter another world, and in the last act when his ditties sound fainter and fainter as he passes over the moorland we are insensibly led away from the depressing reality of life into another world of more beautiful, because more spiritual, presences.

Other Irish dramatists besides these three have striven to give expression to the naturalistic movement in present-day art. Lady Gregory herself, in *The Gaol Gate* (1906), has provided us with a powerful little one-act piece in this style. So, too, Seumas O'Kelly has written a dramatically effective and emotionally poignant drama of peasant conditions in *The Shuiler's Child* (1909). For the most part, however, the Irish writers are too mystical to allow themselves to be dominated by naturalism. A Conn Hourican or a Myles Gorman ever will be spiriting them away in spite of themselves into realms of faery and of romance. Imagination lies at the heart's-seat of them, and dreaming gives them their strength. The practical things of life may for a moment assume a dominating importance in their eyes, but, after all, it is the ideal that haunts them, not so much Ireland itself as Cathleen ni Houlihan, not so much the things of this life as the freer and more beautiful beings of a poetic imagination.

CHAPTER V

THE SYMBOLIC AND POETIC DRAMA

Maurice Maeterlinck

IT is unquestionable that the present age is dominated by two seemingly contradictory dramatic movements. The first, which concerns itself primarily with realistic delineation of actual life and strives to present the problems of existence in concrete form, has been dealt with in the preceding chapter. The present chapter concerns that other force which we may call poetic and symbolic.

In using the word symbolic, it has to be remembered that many of the domestic tragedies themselves shared this feature, and it is a difficult task to distinguish clearly a symbolic and non-symbolic drama. In his own way Ibsen has as many purely symbolic elements in his plays as has Maeterlinck. Nevertheless, Maeterlinck belongs to an entirely different school from that which acknowledges the Norwegian dramatist, and may be accepted almost as that dramatist's complement. Despite the marked realism of a certain section of modern playwrights, symbolism has penetrated into every form of present-day dramatic activity, and at the same time forms the keynote to a particular school of which Maurice Maeterlinck was, a few years ago, one of the most noted leaders, but which has since passed beyond the sphere of his art.

None of Maeterlinck's plays is concerned with realism of setting. His characters are all ideal characters, and his scenes are conjured forth from his own romantic imagination. He loves more the subconscious than the conscious; he prefers death to life, and dream to waking. His theatre is static, because he believes that action can show nothing but the outward emotions of man. His concern is rather with those invisible presences which come across us in moments of silence and change our lives invisibly. It is

not so much that he strives toward an end alien to that of Ibsen and Strindberg, for they too are deeply concerned with the subconscious, as that he stresses more their common aims and employs a different means for their achievement. His typical plays are *L'Oiseau Bleu* (*The Blue Bird,* 1908), *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1892), *Les Aveugles* (*The Blind,* 1890), and *Intérieur* (*The Interior,* 1894). All of these are more or less static and fanciful; all deal with the unseen and spiritual. *L'Oiseau Bleu* is a child's story for adults, striving to depict in fantastic terms the inner reaches of the spirit. The realm of Night and the bark of those about to be born contain in their development a whole world of arcane philosophy. *Pelléas et Mélisande* is the nearest of them all to the terms of more 'ordinary' drama. The tale is one of a maiden, Mélisande, found wandering in a forest and wedded by Golaud, grandson of old King Arkël. Her spirit is not his spirit, and she finds a soul-mate in his brother, Pelléas. Their tragic story is unfolded before us, until Golaud, symbol of human jealousy, kills her frail form. The drama opens and closes on a note of symbolic purpose. In the very first scene we stand before the door of the castle, and voices sound to us from within:[1]

Les Servantes [*à l'intérieur*]. Ouvrez la porte! Ouvrez la porte!

Le Portier. Qui est là? Pourquoi venez-vous m'éveiller? Sortez par les petites portes; sortez par les petites portes; il y en a assez! . . .

Une Servante [*à l'intérieur*]. Nous venons laver le seuil, la porte et le perron; ouvrez donc! ouvrez donc!

Une autre Servante [*à l'intérieur*]. Il y aura de grands événements!

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[1] The translation given at the foot of each page is by L. A. Tadema in the "Scott Library" edition of the plays.

The Maidservants [*within*]. Open the door! Open the door!

The Doorkeeper [*within*]. Who is there? Why have you come and waked me? Out by the little doors; out by the little doors; there are enough of them! . . .

A Servant [*within*]. We have come to wash the door-stone, the door and the steps; open! open!

Another Servant [*within*]. There are to be great doings!

Trosième Servante [*à l'intérieur*]. Il y aura de grandes fêtes! Ouvrez vite! . . .

Les Servantes. Ouvrez donc! ouvrez donc!

Le Portier. Attendez! attendez! Je ne sais pas si je pourrai l'ouvrir. . . . Elle ne s'ouvre jamais. . . . Attendez qu'il fasse clair. . . .

Première Servante. Il fait assez clair au dehors; je vois le soleil par les fentes. . . .

Le Portier. Voici les grandes clefs. . . . Oh! comme ils grincent, les verrous et les serrures. . . . Aidez-moi! aidez-moi! . . .

Les Servantes. Nous tirons, nous tirons. . . .

Deuxième Servante. Elle ne s'ouvrira pas. . . .

Première Servante. Ah! ah! Elle s'ouvre! elle s'ouvre lentement!

Le Portier. Comme elle crie! Elle éveillera tout le monde. . . .

Deuxième Servante [*paraissant sur le seuil*]. Oh! qu'il fait déjà clair au dehors!

Première Servante. Le soleil se lève sur la mer!

Le Portier. Elle est ouverte. . . . Elle est grande ouverte! . . .

[*Toutes les servantes paraissent sur le seuil et le franchissent.*

Première Servante. Je vais d'abord laver le seuil. . . .

Deuxième Servante. Nous ne pourrons jamais nettoyer tout ceci.

D'autres Servantes. Apportez l'eau! apportez l'eau!

Le Portier. Oui, oui; versez l'eau, versez toute l'eau du déluge; vous n'en viendrez jamais à bout. . . .

Third Servant [*within*]. There are to be great merry-makings! Open quickly! . . .

All the Servants. Open! open!

The Doorkeeper. Wait! wait! I don't know that I shall be able to open the door. . . . It never is opened. . . . Wait until daylight comes. . . .

First Servant. It is light enough outside; I can see the sun through the chinks. . . .

The Doorkeeper. Here are the big keys. . . . Oh! oh! how they grate, the bolts and the locks! . . . Help me! help me! . . .

All the Servants. We are pulling, we are pulling. . . .

Second Servant. It will not open. . . .

First Servant. Ah! ah! It is opening! It is opening slowly!

The Doorkeeper. How it creaks! It will wake the whole house. . . .

Second Servant [*appearing on the threshold*]. Oh! how light it is already out of doors!

First Servant. The sun is rising on the sea!

The Doorkeeper. It is open. . . . It is wide open! . . .

[*All the maidservants appear on the threshold, which they cross.*

First Servant. I shall begin by washing the door-stone.

Second Servant. We shall never be able to clean all this.

Other Servants. Bring water! bring water!

The Doorkeeper. Yes, yes; pour water, pour water, pour out all the waters of the flood; you will never be able to do it. . . .

So we pass from one symbolic movement to another. Golaud is in the forest and finds Mélisande. "Which way are you going?" she asks, and his reply is fateful: "I don't know. . . . I too am lost. . . ." The clear water of the fountain in the forest, the dark vaults beneath the castle, the terror of darkness and the terror of light, subtly are presented before us, until in the end we are presented with the final death in which "the little being of mystery, like all of us" (*un pauvre petit être mystérieux, comme tout le monde*) lies passive on the couch of death. *Intérieur* presents a more static atmosphere, and this motionlessness in dramatic form is still further intensified in that poignant little work *Les Aveugles,* in which twelve blind men and women stand powerless in the midst of life, their leader, the old priest, being dead. Terrified and lonely they listen to the sounds round them, to the crackle of twigs under their feet, to the moaning of the sea and the beating of the wind.[1]

Premier Aveugle-né. Il tonne!

Deuxième Aveugle-né. Je crois que c'est une tempête qui s'élève.

La plus vieille Aveugle. Je crois que c'est la mer.

Troisième Aveugle-né. La mer?—Est-ce que c'est la mer?—Mais elle est à deux pas de nous!—Elle est à côté de nous! Je l'entends tout autour de moi!—Il faut que ce soit autre chose!

La jeune Aveugle. J'entends le bruit des vagues à mes pieds.

Premier Aveugle-né. Je crois que c'est le vent dans les feuilles mortes.

Le plus vieil Aveugle. Je crois que les femmes ont raison.

Troisième Aveugle-né. Elle va venir ici!

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[1] The translation given at the foot of each page is by L. A. Tadema in the "Scott Library" edition of the plays.

First Blind Man. It is thundering!

Second Blind Man. I think it is a storm rising.

The Oldest Blind Woman. I think it is the sea.

Third Blind Man. The sea?—Is it the sea?—But it is at two steps from us!—It is beside us! I hear it all round me!—It must be something else!

The Young Blind Woman. I hear the sound of waves at my feet.

First Blind Man. I think it is the wind in the dead leaves.

The Oldest Blind Man. I think the women are right.

Third Blind Man. It will be coming here!

Premier Aveugle-né. D'où vient le vent?
Deuxième Aveugle-né. Il vient du côté de la mer.
Le plus vieil Aveugle. Il vient toujours du côté de la mer; elle nous entoure de tous côtés. Il ne peut pas venir d'autre part. . . .
Premier Aveugle-né. Ne songeons plus à la mer!

These somewhat lengthy quotations have been given for the purpose of demonstrating the tendencies of this symbolic theatre. The playwrights do not endeavour to summon forth from their audiences the great passions which we associate, for example, with the Shakespearian tragedy; their aim is more delicate, and they strive to awake in us emotions of a finer and less tangible sort.

While Maeterlinck was one of the first dramatists to inform his works with an atmosphere entirely unreal (using that word in the sense of that which deals with the outward phenomena of life), there are many who have accompanied or followed him in his quest for the mystery of existence. In Italy Pirandello has adopted this method in several of his plays, and in Russia has arisen a whole school of dramatists who endeavour to avoid the outwardly real, and who clothe deep thoughts in fantastic guise. Of these one of the most noteworthy in N. N. Evreinov, whose means of expression have moved gradually from the modified realism to a pronounced impressionism and fantasy. Among his more recent works written in this latter style there is a little 'monodrama' entitled *The Theatre of the Soul* which may be taken as typical of this more advanced movement. It is prefaced by a prologue, in which a Professor comes out on the stage before a lowered curtain in front of which stands a blackboard. He addresses the audience: [1]

Some days ago, ladies and gentlemen,[2] the author of the work which is to be produced to-day, *The Theatre of the Soul,*

First Blind Man. Where does the wind come from?
Second Blind Man. It comes from the sea.
The Oldest Blind Man. It always comes from the sea; the sea hems us in on all sides. It cannot come from elsewhere. . . .
First Blind Man. Let us not think of the sea any more!

[1] The following rendering has been specially prepared for this volume. As translated by M. Potapenko and C. St. John the play was acted once in London in 1915.

[2] The original has 'citizens.'

came to me. I confess that at first I was prejudiced against this work, deeming that it would be, as so often happens in our theatres, a kind of vaudeville show, lacking in creative power and in significance. I had the pleasure, however, of realizing that *The Theatre of the Soul* was a truly learned production, corresponding with the latest discoveries of psycho-physiology. The investigations of Wundt, Freud, Theophile Ribot, and others have shown that the human soul is not a homogeneous thing, but that it consists of several Egos. Do you follow me? [*He writes on the board "$I_1 + I_2 + I_3 = I_n$."*] Fichte assumes that if 'I' is 'I,' then the world is not 'I.' Clear? Yes. But, according to the latest discoveries, while the world is not 'I,' 'I' is also not 'I.' Clear? 'I' is not 'I,' because in 'I' there are several 'I's.' In point of fact 'I' consists of three 'I's.' [*He writes "$I = \frac{x}{3}$."*]

So the big 'I,' the central 'I' (in former terminology the Soul), falls into three parts: 'I' the first, 'I' the rational, the *Learned I* (in the old terminology Thought); 'I' the second, 'I' the emotional, the *Agitated I* (in the old terminology Emotion); 'I' the third, 'I' the subconscious, the *Houseless I* (in the old terminology the Eternal). Clear? All the three 'I's' go to make up the great central 'I.' [*He writes "$I + I + I = I$."*] The ancients assumed that 'I' lay in the liver; Descartes assumed that it lay in the brain; but the author of the present production assumes that the soul contained in our body lies exactly against that part of the chest which we strike when we utter such words as "My soul is weary," "My soul rejoices," "My soul boils with indignation," etc. In accordance with this the scenes of the soul are drawn in the following manner. [*He draws on the board, with coloured chalk, a picture which he further describes.*] Over the enlarged diaphragm, on the aorta and the hollow vein above, hangs a huge heart, beating at the rate of from 55 to 125 throbs a minute. To the left and right it is surrounded by the curtains of the lungs, which breathe from 14 to 18 times a minute. At the back appears the vertebral column, with the spinal ribs. Here there is a small telephone of a nerve-yellow colour. On the diaphragm quiver pale yellow threads of nerves. . . . Here, so to say, is a picture of the 'theatre of action' of the 'I' or self. Knowledge, ladies and gentlemen, not only explains, it brings relief; thus, for example, it is not sufficient to say that 'I' acted foolishly. It must be explained which 'I' happened to act foolishly. If the emotional 'I' was foolish, no more need be said. The subconcious 'I' is also not worth considering. But beware if the foolish 'I' was the rational. Yet, ladies and gentlemen, in whom is that 'I' fully and clearly developed in our mad age? . . . Here I must end my speech and

give way to the author, the actors, and you, respected judges of this unusual production.

[*He goes off; the blackboard is removed. The curtain rises to reveal the scene of the soul as described by the Professor. On the stage, that is, on the diaphragm, sit all the three 'I's.' They resemble one another; they are all in black, yet they are dressed in different ways. The first 'I' wears a frock coat; the second 'I' has an artistic blouse with a red bow tie; the third 'I' has a travelling-jacket. There are further differences between them in that the first 'I' is a trifle grey, very tidily groomed, spectacled, pale, with thin lips and restrained manners; the second 'I' is dishevelled, young-looking, with scarlet lips and loud gestures; the third 'I' wears a black half-mask, carries a travelling-bag, under his arm, and sleeps in the manner of a weary traveller.*

Second I [*at the telephone*]. What? Hullo! Hear badly? But I'm talking quite loud. . . . You've a noise in your ears? Your nerves are on edge. . . . Oh, well. . . . Brandy! . . . I say to you—brandy! . . .

First I. Remember, just for your own amusement you are forcing him to empty the third flask. Poor heart, look how it's beating! . . .

Second I. I suppose in your opinion it ought to doze all the time like that subconscious thing? A fine occupation!

First I. If the heart goes on beating like that, it won't beat long.

Second I. Well, all the same it will have to stop, sooner or later.

First I. You are repeating what I said.

Second I. You see, you sometimes say sensible things.

First I. Don't touch the nerves! You've been told . . .

[*The nerves grate whenever they are touched.*

This will serve as an example. It may appear that the placing of a drama within a man, the making of the characters 'souls' or 'I's' is hopelessly bizarre and fantastic, yet we must remember that here, after all, is something new, something far away from the interminable tragedies of the eighteenth century and the stereotyped comedies and romantic operas. Moreover, here, whether we like it or not, is the art-form of the immediate future. Dramatists in England and Ireland are steadily moving along the paths already traversed by Evreinov and his companions. It is not that all or even any of them have achieved such fantasy

of expression, but that each informs his works with a peculiar atmosphere which is distinct from the symbolism visible in Ibsen's better-known works. Whereas Ibsen normally lays stress mainly upon the problem or upon the men and women, utilizing suggestion and symbolism to raise his plays above the particular to the general, these poetic writers lay their stress on the forces that exist beyond man, on fate, on the spirit of nature, on the fairy world. Their atmosphere is the atmosphere of mystery, not the atmosphere of so-called reality, wherein are seen only the visible phenomena of life.

(ii) J. M. Synge and W. B. Yeats; the Irish School

Of these dramatists there can be no question but that John Millington Synge and Mr William Butler Yeats, each in his own province, stand high above the others, Synge for his dramatic intensity, Mr Yeats for his supreme lyrical power. Both take their inspiration from their native land, but both viewed Ireland not as a particular piece of territory, but as a living being with a spiritual presence of its own, a symbol of something beyond their mortal comprehensions. Synge was born in 1871, but, leaving Ireland, it seemed as if he were to lose those talents which were marked in his brilliant youth. In Paris he wasted precious hours in the midst of a decadent Bohemianism, and, had it not luckily happened that Mr Yeats, in the year 1897, stumbled upon him there, it is possible that his name now would be unknown. With the insight of true genius Mr. Yeats saw both his strength and his weakness, divined the good that was in him and his principal needs. Resolutely he counselled him, sending him off from the artistic and would-be artistic circles of the French capital, vitiated and over-civilized, to the barren stretches of moorland and mountain on the west coast of Ireland. After a few moments of doubt and perplexity Synge found his true medium. He listened to the peculiar intonations of the Irish peasantry, and suddenly discovered that that strange English dialect, all transfused with the poetic imagination of the Gaelic mind, formed a novel and

beautiful medium for the expression of his thoughts and passions. He saw these peasants, lonely in the presence of the mountains and the moors, and he realized, as Wordsworth did before him, the natural majesty of their simple characters. He wandered over the barren stretches of heather, and listened to the ceaseless roar of the Atlantic on the storm-swept coast, so that there came to him some conception of the mystery of nature, and his heart filled with a sense of that darkness and depth and beauty which have always characterized the literary works of the Celt. His genius, however, was by no means wholly tragic. In the Aran Islands he still kept his grip upon reality, and, observing life, he was able to write his comic masterpiece, *The Playboy of the Western World.* In some ways this comedy is his most perfect work, but it has not the depth visible in the still comic, but more imaginative, little sketch *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903), the deeply poignant *Riders to the Sea* (1904), the strange *Well of the Saints* (1905), and the majestic, though unfinished, *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1910). His mind is too full of the beautiful and the strong to give free expression to lighter laughter and merriment.

Riders to the Sea is one of the masterpieces of our modern theatre. It is simple, but grand in its simplicity. The scene is a lonely sea-coast cottage. Outside the ocean roars hungrily for its toll of human lives. Within Maurya sits remembering with bitterness its greedy tax-gathering, remembers the father and the grandfather and the four strong sons who have perished in the wild waste of seething waters. To her one son alone is left, and he will go to the horse-fair far off on the mainland. Maurya knows what it will mean; it will mean that men will carry in to her a dead son, snatched lifeless from the waves. So it comes to pass, and darkness settles down on the lonely cottage. The sea has claimed Maurya's all.

We are here in the presence of elemental things. The sea becomes a living force, a demon hungering after men; the figures in the cottage, weak as they may be in face of the physical power of the ocean, are titanic in their courage and grandeur. The tragedy goes back to primal emotions,

to the struggle of man with nature. It is strong in its primeval intensity, the weakening force of civilization far off, distant, and unheard. The universality, the strength, the majesty, of this little work cannot too highly be praised, but these would not have taken such a hold of our hearts had Synge not gained a new medium in which to express his innermost feelings:

Maurya [*raising her head and speaking as if she did not see the people around her*]. They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening. [*To Nora*] Give me the Holy Water, Nora; there's a small sup still on the dresser. [*Nora gives it to her*

Maurya [*drops Michael's clothes across Bartley's feet, and sprinkles the Holy Water over him*]. It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'd be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have now, and it's time, surely. It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking.

[*She kneels down again, crossing herself, and saying prayers under her breath.*

Cathleen [*to an old man*]. Maybe yourself and Eamon would make a coffin when the sun rises. We have fine white boards herself bought, God help her, thinking Michael would be found, and I have a new cake you can eat while you'll be working.

The Old Man [*looking at the boards*]. Are there nails with them?

Cathleen. There are not, Colum; we didn't think of the nails.

Another Man. It's a great wonder she wouldn't think of the nails, and all the coffins she's seen made already.

Cathleen. It's getting old she is, and broken.

[*Maurya stands up again very slowly and spreads out the pieces of Michael's clothes beside the body, sprinkling them with the last of the Holy Water.*

Nora [*in a whisper to Cathleen*]. She's quiet now and easy; but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well. It's fonder she was of Michael, and would anyone have thought that?

Cathleen [*slowly and clearly*]. An old woman will be soon tired with anything she will do, and isn't it nine days herself is after crying and keening, and making great sorrow in the house?

Maurya [*puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on Bartley's feet*]. They're all together this time, and the end is come. May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's soul, and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn [*bending her head*]; and may He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of every one is left living in the world.

[*She pauses, and the keen rises a little more loudly from the women, then sinks away.*

Maurya [*continuing*]. Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can he want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied.

[*She kneels down again, and the curtain falls slowly.*

Deirdre of the Sorrows is a different, but no less arresting, drama. Here Synge has taken for his theme one of the most poignant and deeply tragic of all those lovely tales of Celtic love and mystery, a tale which has been utilized not only by himself, but also by Mr G. W. E. Russell and by Mr W. B. Yeats. The story tells how Deirdre, betrothed to Conchubor, King of Ulster, whom she loves not, finds her mate in Naisi, son of Usna. Together the two fly to Scotland, and for seven blessed years they dwell in peace among the mountains of Alban. Conchubor still desires the beautiful Deirdre, and he sends a message of friendliness, bidding them return to Erin. Believing that all is well, they come back, and Conchubor, black treachery in his heart, slays Naisi's brothers, murders Naisi himself, and would seize Deirdre. Her spirit, however, is linked with that of her lover, and she dies with his dagger in her breast. No mere description can express the beauty with which Synge has clothed this legend. The dim figures, conceived in an ageless past and tinged with the roseate hue of romance, take life before us. We see the lovely maidenhood of the resolute Deirdre, waking to life when she hears the voice of her mate, Naisi. We see Naisi himself, strong and handsome, a fit mate for her. They know of the doom which hangs over their love, but they prefer the joy of some

passing years to the endless misery of blasted lives. It is in the second act that Synge shows his full genius. When the messengers of Conchubor arrive Deirdre instinctively knows that the proffered friendship covers deceit and treachery. She would not return to her native land, and would persuade Naisi to remain in the mountains of Alban. But Naisi is not quite so completely filled with love as she. For her, love is everything. No doubt or question may enter in to break its tremendous intensity. Naisi, on the other hand, sometimes wonders whether after all this dream may not some time be shattered. Mayhap one day he would come to lose his love of Deirdre, and sorrow would consume their lives. Deirdre overhears his words to Fergus, and, true to her nature, she makes up her mind. They will return. Although death, she knows, awaits her, it is better to die when love is strong than to spend hopeless years in slow-consuming bitterness. They arrive at Conchubor's house. Naisi's brothers, far down in the woods, are treacherously set upon, and Naisi would go to save them. Deirdre knows it is death, and she tries to dissuade her lover, but he throws her off with cruel words. The canker of doubt, the canker of weariness, has poisoned his soul, and their love is nearly sundered. The tumult ceases, and Naisi is dead. Lonely Deirdre stands before Conchubor, when a new turmoil arises. Fergus, the messenger of Conchubor, angered at the treachery of his master, has set his palace in flames, but Conchubor can think of nothing but his desire of Deirdre. It is fitting that, in the midst of the flaming palace, she should put Naisi's dagger to her breast. She dies, as she had lived, his mate. It seems only a pity, but a tragic pity, that to those two death had not come even sooner, that Naisi's last words to her who had given all for his sake should have been words of cruel and bitter import.

Synge's other plays are not so tragic as these. *In the Shadow of the Glen* is a peculiar little sketch of Irish peasant life, romantically and at the same time cynically treated. A little lonely cottage stands in the glen. Nora, the wife, is somewhat relieved when Daniel Burke, her husband,

lays himself down on his bed of death. She is ill suited to be a home-keeping housewife, and her emotions go forth to the wild moors and the grey road. For her these things are symbolized in the Tramp, to whom she has given her love. The Tramp and she sit chatting, jesting, and making plans, as Daniel Burke lies there in his cot by the wall. Nora, however, is not sufficiently in love with the Tramp, as a man, to keep herself from making advances to Mike Dara, who comes in to visit her. What success she would have had we cannot say, for the wife's newly found freedom is rudely broken by a sneeze from the corpse, and Daniel rises to confront her. He has only been playing her a trick, and now he knows her for what he suspected her to be. In rage he sends her out of the cottage, but she is content to go. The Tramp will be waiting for her down the road. This novel treatment of a theme used as long ago as 1701 in *The Funeral* gained for Synge an amount of opposition in Dublin. Here was an Irishman daring to suggest that any Irish wife could be faithless. Whatever Irishmen might say among themselves about Irish women, surely it was unnecessary to let all the world know that Noras might dwell in country cottages in the west. The opposition had both justice and folly on its side. It was inspired by political motives, and we can see quite clearly that, in the former state of Ireland, there was no good in showing up evils which existed and which might have been advantageously exposed in other circumstances. On the other hand, politics frequently make us lose our sense of humour, and we ought to be able to appreciate the cynical charm of Synge's play without generalizing to make it a common attack upon all Erin's daughters. Besides, apart from national associations, it is one of the most cleverly written and ably constructed one-act dramas of modern times.

The Well of the Saints is equally cynical, but more symbolic in import. Comedy and imagination meet here in one, Synge having captured the true secret of that elusive quality, humour. The theme of the play is splendidly fantastic. There is a certain well, belonging to a certain saint, the waters of which can make the blind see. To this

well come an old beggar and his wife. They have never seen one another, but they believe one another to be beautiful. The saint gives them the gift of sight, and suddenly each sees the haggard, withered visage of the other. Harsh words end in blows, and they part. Darkness settles on them once more, and by chance they stumble on one another. They start talking, and gradually their old companionship revives. The divine gift of laughter eases over their troubles, and they are about to set off on their united travels again when the saint reappears. He will renew their vision. The thought, which before had been full of happiness and hope, is bitter to them, and the old beggar can do no more than throw the goblet of blessed water from the hands of the saint on to the ground. Darkness with visions and hope is better than light with mental bitterness.

Synge's other drama, *The Playboy of the Western World,* can hardly be dealt with satisfactorily in this section. It is a realistic, if fancifully conceived, picture of the Irish peasantry, and belongs wholly to the realm of comedy. Even in treating of *In the Shadow of the Glen* we have departed sufficiently from the normal development of the symbolic drama, and it is his contribution to this *genre* which is Synge's greatest claim to fame. In after times he will be remembered most for *Riders to the Sea* and for *Deirdre of the Sorrows.* His skill in the delineation of character, his style, his sense of majesty, make him a supreme tragic dramatist. It is not too much to say that in these plays this Irish author came close to the genius of Shakespeare. As the years pass he will unquestionably stand out more and more as one of the principal dramatic writers of our century.

Mr W. B. Yeats differs from Synge in his general lack of humour, in his employment of poetry instead of prose, and in his mysticism. Some of his lyrics are finer than any of his dramas, beautiful as these are; and his esotericism tends to weaken the truly dramatic element in his work for the theatre. In spite of that, he remains, and will remain, one of the dominant European figures in the development of the poetic and symbolic play. Mr Yeats'

dramatic activities stretch from *The Countess Cathleen* (printed 1892; acted 1899) to *Four Plays for Dancers* (published 1920). Nearly all are on poetic or fanciful themes.

It is possible that his finest achievement in this sphere was his first, *The Countess Cathleen.* Like Synge, Mr Yeats had to suffer a certain amount of opposition when his play was first produced. The actors, he tells us,

> had to face a very vehement opposition stirred up by a politician and a newspaper, the one accusing me in a pamphlet, the other in long articles day after day, of blasphemy because of the language of the demons or of Shemus Rua, and because I made a woman sell her soul and yet escape damnation, and of a lack of patriotism because I made Irish men and women, who, it seems, never did such a thing, sell theirs. The politician or the newspaper persuaded some forty Catholic students to sign a protest against the play, and a Cardinal, who avowed that he had not read it, to make another, and both politician and newspaper made such obvious appeals to the audience to break the peace, that a score or so of police were sent to the theatre to see that they did not.

In spite of little-minded and mistaken patriotic enthusiasm *The Countess Cathleen* has come to be regarded as one of the most beautiful poetic dramas of modern times. The story, as Mr Yeats tells us, was taken from an Irish newspaper, where it was given as an Irish legend, but was apparently translated from a French tale. Famine is creeping over the land, and two Demon Merchants are wandering up and down buying souls for bread. The Countess Cathleen, majestic in her pity, offers to buy off the souls that have been bartered at the terrible price of her own. The Merchants, eager to gain so high a price, willingly consent, but they are thwarted in the end, for a divine pity takes pity on her own, and she is granted a heavenly crown. The drama is complicated by the presence of Aleel, lover of Cathleen, and singer of beautiful songs. His is the spirit of poetry, he is the lover of art:

> Impetuous heart, be still, be still,
> Your sorrowful love can never be told;
> Cover it up with a lonely tune.
> He that could bend all things to His will
> Has covered the door of the infinite fold
> With the pale stars and the wandering moon.

It is his impetuosity and passion which give to the drama its last fading beauty. The lines are so lovely and so characteristic of Mr Yeats' poetic spirit that they may be quoted here in full:

Cathleen. Bend down your faces, Oona and Aleel;
I gaze upon them as the swallow gazes
Upon the nest under the eave, before
She wander the loud waters. Do not weep
Too great a while, for there is many a candle
On the High Altar though one fall. Aleel,
Who sang about the dancers of the woods,
That know not the hard burden of the world,
Having but breath in their kind bodies, farewell!
And farewell, Oona, you who played with me,
And bore me in your arms about the house
When I was but a child and therefore happy.
Therefore happy, even like those that dance.
The storm is in my hair and I must go. [*She dies.*

Oona. Bring me the looking-glass.

[*A woman brings it to her out of the inner room. Oona holds it over the lips of Cathleen. All is silent for a moment. And then she speaks in a half-scream:*

O, she is dead!

A Peasant. She was the great white lily of the world.

A Peasant. She was more beautiful than the pale stars.

An Old Peasant Woman. The little plant I love is broken in two.

[*Aleel takes the looking-glass from Oona and flings it upon the floor so that it is broken in many pieces.*

Aleel. I shatter you in fragments, for the face
That brimmed you up with beauty is no more:
And die, dull heart, for she whose mournful words
Made you a living spirit has passed away
And left you but a ball of passionate dust.
And you, proud earth and plumy sea, fade out!
For you may hear no more her faltering feet,
But are left lonely amid the clamorous war
Of angels upon devils.

[*He stands up; almost every one is kneeling, but it has grown so dark that only confused forms can be seen.*

And I who weep
Call curses on you, Time and Fate and Change,
And have no excellent hope but the great hour
When you shall plunge headlong through bottomless space.

[*A flash of lightning followed immediately by thunder.*

A Peasant Woman. Pull him upon his knees before his curses
Have plucked thunder and lightning on our heads.

Aleel. Angels and devils clash in the middle air,
And brazen swords clang upon brazen helms.

[*A flash of lightning followed immediately by thunder.*

Yonder a bright spear cast out of a sling,
Has torn through Balor's eye and the dark clans
Fly screaming as they fled Moytura of old.

[*Everything is lost in darkness.*

An Old Man. The Almighty wrath at our great weakness and sin
Has blotted out the world and we must die.

[*The darkness is broken by a visionary light. The peasants seem to be kneeling upon the rocky slope of a mountain, and vapour full of storm and ever-changing light is sweeping above them and behind them. Half in the light, half in the shadow, stand armed angels. Their armour is old and worn, and their drawn swords dim and dinted. They stand as if upon the air in formation of battle and look downward with stern faces. The peasants cast themselves on the ground.*

Aleel. Look no more on the half-closed gates of Hell,
But speak to me, whose mind is smitten of God,
That it may be no more with mortal things,
And tell of her who lies there. [*He seizes one of the angels.*
Till you speak
You shall not drift into eternity.

The Angel. The light beats down; the gates of pearl are wide.
And she is passing to the floor of peace,
And Mary of the seven times wounded heart
Has kissed her lips, and the long blessed hair
Has fallen on her face; The Light of Lights
Looks always on the motive, not the deed,
The Shadow of Shadows on the deed alone.

[*Aleel releases the angel and kneels.*

Oona. Tell them who walk upon the floor of peace
That I would die and go to her I love;
The years like great black oxen tread the world,
And God the herdsman goads them on behind
And I am broken by their passing feet.

[*A sound of far-off horns seems to come from the heart of the Light. The vision melts away, and the forms of the kneeling peasants appear faintly in the darkness.*[1]

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[1] This last scene was slightly revised after the performance of 1899. The variations are given in the *Poems* of 1912, pp. 315–319.

Before *The Countess Cathleen* first appeared on the stage *The Land of Heart's Desire* had been performed, in 1894. This is another union of the poetical treatment of peasant life and the world of spiritual presences. Bridget Bruin is representative of the matter-of-fact, hard-working world, completely out of touch with her son Shawn's wife, Mary, whose mind is filled with "foolish dreams" of

> How a Princess Edane,
> A daughter of a King of Ireland, heard
> A voice singing on a May Eve like this,
> And followed half awake and half asleep,
> Until she came into the Land of Faery,
> Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
> Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
> Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue.

Out of the woods comes a fairy child, and at its call Mary must go. She loves her Shawn, she loves the world, but she has heard the horns of the elfin troops, and her spirit departs to the land of dancing and joy, even in death. There is a sound of feet outside on the grass and many voices singing:

> The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
> The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
> And the lonely of heart is withered away;
> While the faeries dance in a place apart,
> Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
> Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;
> For they hear the wind laugh and murmur
> and sing
> Of a land where even the old are fair,
> And even the wise are merry of tongue;
> But I heard a reed of Coolaney say—
> "When the wind has laughed and murmured
> and sung,
> The lonely of heart is withered away."

Among Mr Yeats' other dramas, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902) seems the most arresting. Many of the rest, among them *The Shadowy Waters* (printed 1900, acted 1904, revised 1906), *The Hour-glass* (1903, revised 1912), *The King's Threshold* (1903), and *Deirdre* (1906), are full of beautiful poetry, but all suffer from the defects of his still

more recent works in making lovely verse the prime agent in securing his effects. Action becomes lost under a shimmering mist of delightful words. *Cathleen Ni Houlihan,* on the other hand, tells a straightforward story—how in 1798 Michael Gillane is preparing to marry the girl he loves, Delia Cahel, and how an old crone enters the cottage and with her words fires the heart of Michael. As it came to Mary Bruin, so the call of spiritual life has come to him and he must go. In spite of all pleadings he steps out of the cottage, heedless of their words, and the voice of the old crone can be heard outside. But she is no woman, this strange figure; she is Cathleen Ni Houlihan, symbol of Ireland herself, and when they look out of the cottage door they see that she has become transformed. Instead of an old crone she has become "a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen."

All of Mr Yeats' dramas suffer from too great lyrical fervour, and from a lack of action; yet they are incomparably the finest poetic plays of our time. Their union of reality and of spiritual things, their note of dreamy beauty, their pre-eminent mysticism, place them in a sphere by themselves.

Of those other Irish dramatists who adopted something of the same style Mr Edward Martyn claims particular attention. From his first effort, *The Heather Field* (1899), to his last works of the years just before the War he has provided the theatre with several plays of sterling excellence and true beauty. He is the more remarkable because he unites an unflinching realism, akin to that of the domestic playwrights, with a vivid poetic imagination. *The Heather Field* illustrates this well. Carden Tyrrell, the hero, is a poet in temperament. He sees things beyond the ken of mortal man, and his whole life is bound up in an ideal. That ideal takes the form of a desire to reclaim the broad heather-lands on his estate. His money goes steadily; day by day he strives, and day by day the moorland baffles him. He gets a mortgage on his land; too poor now to pay it off, he sees with misery that all has gone to naught. Perhaps even now, had he been able to go away, he might have died happy, for grass had been springing where the

heather was. But it was not his fate to die in peace. His son Kit, playing in the fields, gathers a bunch of heather, and brings it in laughing to his father. It is from the field which he has been striving to reclaim. A cry tells us that his heart is broken, and darkness settles on his spirit. His mind is smitten, and he dies a lunatic. It is evident here that we have more than a mere domestic play. Apart from the prevalent idealism of Carden Tyrrell himself, we are faced with the symbolism of the whole theme, and the play consequently comes nearer to Synge and Yeats than it does to Ibsen and Galsworthy.

Maeve (1900) is even more inwrought with the poetic spirit. The fairy world here takes shape before us, and the story is the story of Mr Yeats' *The Land of Heart's Desire.* Maeve O'Heynes is a replica of Mary Bruin; her sister Finola is the companion of the old Bridget. To Maeve as to Mary comes the vision of the fairy folk, of Queen Maeve who lives her spirit life in a moorland haunt and who keeps in her hands all permanent beauty. Maeve O'Heynes, again like Mary, hears the call of two worlds, and the one proves stronger than the other. Here, more clearly even than in *The Heather Field,* Mr Martyn shows himself as one of the school of poetic and symbolic playwrights. *An Enchanted Sea* (1902; printed 1904) carries on his development of what may be styled the imaginative-realist drama. The fairy world is here represented in Guy Font, who is not wholly human; his kin are in fairyland, and his spirit is in the waves of the sea. From the sea he came, and to the sea he returned.

Mr Martyn's real strength is seen to lie in this strange union of reality and of the supernatural. Few dramatists have succeeded as he has in welding together into a complete whole these two spheres. At the same time, his art in general shows a certain want of orientation. If he is mystically inclined in *Maeve,* he sinks to sordid actuality in *Grangecolman* (1912). If his supernatural atmosphere is perfectly achieved in *An Enchanted Sea,* it is somewhat vitiated in the comic atmosphere of *The Dream Physician* (1914). His fame in the future will undoubtedly depend

upon the peculiar idealistic spirit that inspired *The Heather Field* and *Maeve*. No other writer of our time, save perhaps Sir James Barrie, has quite the same power of uniting these two contraries.

(iii) Sir James Barrie

In Sir James Barrie there is apparently something in common with the spirit of Mr Martyn, but he is distinguished from the latter by his gift of humour, by his sentimentalism, and by his satirical tendencies. Normally Sir James Barrie looks at the world through rose-coloured spectacles. A vein of sentimentalism blends with his whimsicality, and, if he is satirical, he is never bitter, though at times he may be trivial. He is a man who has done a great deal for the theatre, yet often we feel that he has not done all that he could have done, that he has not given us consistently of his best. If *Peter Pan* (1904) is a perennial delight, if *The Admirable Crichton* (1902) is a charming fantasy, if *A Slice of Life* (1910) is a delicious piece of literary satire, we feel that *The Little Minister* (1897) is little more than a sentimental romance, that *Der Tag* (1914) is a potboiler not in very good taste, that *A Kiss for Cinderella* (1916) is mawkish and weak, and that *The Truth about the Russian Dancers* (1920) has little beyond topical interest. The fact is that Sir James Barrie has exploited his vein of whimsicality too much. Some of his topsy-turvy conceptions are little short of being works of genius, but it is no good criticism which can profess to enjoy plays which obviously have nothing of value in them. Idolatry may be pressed too far, as we know to our cost by the vast and often foolish Shakespeare literature, and Sir James Barrie himself might, perhaps, be the first to acknowledge that many of his plays stand upon a plane infinitely lower than his true masterpieces.

Of these masterpieces *Peter Pan* comes first in popular esteem. So well known is this fantasy of the boy who never grew up that it would be mere waste of space here to analyse its plot or to criticize it in detail. It has captured

the hearts of young and of old alike, and will no doubt remain for many years a successful stage play. *The Admirable Crichton* (1902) presents a realistic counterpart. Instead of a fanciful theme, the author introduces us to an almost normal aristocratic English household, which is disturbed only by Lord Loam's queer endeavours to establish a common ground between his servants and himself. If Lord Loam is eccentric, Crichton is a perfectly model butler, cool, polite, and polished. Imagine these men, says the author, cast on a desert island, and in Lear's words, "Handy-dandy, which is the justice; which is the thief?" Lord Loam and his aristocratic relations prove themselves utterly useless; it is Crichton who alone possesses the requisite presence of mind and handiness. It is he who makes a camp-fire, he who builds a shelter, he who finds food. And, in doing all these things, he becomes the aristocrat. He is master of the situation. For a time Lord Loam and the others, chilled in the darkness of the night, creep back to the fire and accept the altered conditions. Two years they stay there, and Crichton is just falling in love with Lady Mary when civilization returns in the shape of a rescue ship. They are all carried back to London. Lord Loam assumes his old position, and Crichton once more plays the part of the model butler. It is this power of conceiving changed conditions, of imagining the silk-hatted, frock-coated Parliamentary Minister in corduroys and slouch cap, which gives to Sir James Barrie's works their chief charm and fascination.

This topsy-turvydom and queer blending of two worlds appears in an altered form in his more recent works *Dear Brutus* (1917) and *Mary Rose* (1920). In the former a group of ordinary people are shown to us lamenting that they might, in other circumstances, have been this or that. Let us, says Sir James Barrie, imagine what would have happened had some sprite been at hand to give them their wish. So we see them all in other circumstances, such as they might have lived in had fate given them what they desired. But hardly anything is changed. After all,

they remain what they were. Character, says the author, is the only destiny. *Mary Rose* makes even greater use of the supernatural. Here Celtic legend has been called in, and Mary Rose, like that other Mary, her namesake in *The Land of Heart's Desire,* is carried away to the land of the fairies. More realistically the same blending of forces appears in *The Will* (1913), where a single man is shown at three stages of his career at a moment of crisis.

Less of this quality is apparent in the better-executed *What Every Woman Knows* (1908), a tale of woman's influence on man, and in *Quality Street* (1902), a subtle study of quiet age. Nor does it make its presence felt in the delicately worked one-act puzzle *Shall We Join the Ladies?* (1922). In all of these, as in Barrie's other dramas, the preponderating element is that of the sheer cleverness of the author. Even when the sentimentalism intrudes most artificially we feel the presence of his subtlety and his intellectual skill. Such a work as *A Slice of Life,* with its good-humoured satire of stage tricks and its delightful puppets, the Hyphen-Browns, is perfect for its sheer precision and waywardness. This subtlety and the other-world fantasy presented in some of his plays are the qualities which make Sir James Barrie at once typical of his age and a pioneer in a new dramatic style. While he has few direct followers he has taught many lessons to the English playwrights of to-day, and the symbolic drama owes much to him. At the same time, his appeal is largely to the sentimental. There is little that is strong in his work, and we are inclined to feel that his contributions to the theatre fail beside the trenchant comedies of Mr Bernard Shaw.

(iv) Lord Dunsany

In various ways has the symbolic theatre expressed itself. It has taken upon itself the sphere of political satire, as in Mr C. K. Munro's *The Rumour* (1922), or that of religious mysticism, as in Mr Jerome K. Jerome's *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* (1910) and Mr Charles Rann Kennedy's *The Servant in the House* (1908). It has, too, made use of

supernatural belief, as in Mr G. K. Chesterton's *Magic* (1913). Symbolism of a kind also enters into the strange works of Lord Dunsany (E. J. M. D. Plunkett, Baron Dunsany), and, even if his plays have not the same inner meaning as those of the others, the methods which he employs are fundamentally the same. The great sphere of Lord Dunsany is the world of fear. He has dramas which do not deal with this subject, but no man has excelled him in arousing, by delicate touches, an emotion of terror, sometimes of awe. The means at his command are a subtle treatment of Oriental motives, and an exquisite artistic fancy. An Irishman, he has separated himself from the school of Synge and of Mr Yeats in finding no inspiration, or but little inspiration, in his native land. Because of the delicacy of his touch Lord Dunsany's prime *métier* is the short one-act play. His subject-matter frequently prevents him from handling satisfactorily the longer three-act or five-act form. Of his works up to the year 1922 several have singled themselves out as being of surpassing merit: *The Glittering Gate* (1909), *The Gods of the Mountain* (1911), *A Night at an Inn* (1916), *The Queen's Enemies* (1916), *The Laughter of the Gods* (1919), and *If* (1921). Many of these deal with the theme of grim justice or revenge. *The Queen's Enemies* tells how in ancient Egypt a princess, after feasting her guests, destroys them by flooding her underground banquet-hall. *A Night at an Inn* relates how retribution comes to the robbers of a god. This latter work is so typical of Lord Dunsany's style that it merits some analysis. The scene is a lonely inn, far away from the nearest human habitation, which has been taken as a hiding place by A. E. Scott-Fortescue, known as "The Toff" by his companions. He, William Jones ("Bill"), Albert Thomas, and Jacob Smith ("Sniggers") have stolen a precious jewel from the eye of an Eastern idol, and three priests of this god Klesh have tracked them to England. It is the plan of the Toff to lure them to a deserted spot and there deal with them. His plan succeeds so far as is humanly possible. One by one the three priests are slain by his devices. All seems well. Down they sit

to pledge their own healths, until Smith, who goes out to get some water, returns in terror. As they try to get the truth from him, the idol itself steps in, groping like a man blind, picks up the ruby and moves off. For a time there is silence.

The Toff. O, great heavens!

Albert [*in a childish, plaintive voice*]. What is it, Toffy?

Bill. Albert, it is that obscene idol [*in a whisper*] come from India.

Albert. It is gone.

Bill. It has taken its eye.

Sniggers. We are saved.

A Voice off [*with outlandish accent*]. Meestaire William Jones, Able Seaman.

[*The Toff has never spoken, never moved. He only gazes stupidly in horror.*

Bill. Albert, Albert, what is this? [*He rises and walks out. One moan is heard. Sniggers goes to the window. He falls back sickly.*]

Albert [*in a whisper*]. What has happened?

Sniggers. I have seen it. I have seen it. Oh, I have seen it!

[*He returns to the table.*

The Toff [*laying his hand very gently on Sniggers' arm, speaking softly and winningly*]. What was it, Sniggers?

Sniggers. I have seen it.

Albert. What?

Sniggers. Oh!

Voice. Meestaire Albert Thomas, Able Seaman.

Albert. Must I go, Toffy? Toffy, must I go?

Sniggers [*clutching him*]. Don't move.

Albert [*going*]. Toffy, Toffy. [*Exit.*

Voice. Meestaire Jacob Smith, Able Seaman.

Sniggers. I can't go, Toffy, I can't go. I can't do it. [*He goes.*

Voice. Meestaire Arnold Everett Scott-Fortescue, late Esquire, Able Seaman.

The Toff. I did not foresee it. [*Exit.*

CURTAIN

Nowhere is Lord Dunsany's power of evoking a sense of the uncanny more clearly shown, yet there seems a flaw in this play. The atmosphere is perfect save for the idol. We are too materialistic nowadays to accept the possibility that an Indian idol may take motion and seek for vengeance,

and although there is mystery in the calling forth of the names, we never forget the apparition. It might have been possible here to intensify the emotion of the play by making the idol seize the ruby from Sniggers when he was outside. The narration of the wonderful and the supernatural will always be more terrifying and awe-inspiring than the direct introduction of those forces. The same or a similar criticism may be levelled against *The Gods of the Mountain,* a strikingly ironical work in which some beggars, who impose upon a superstitious township, are themselves turned to stone.

Nearly all of Lord Dunsany's dramas hint at more than is shown to us, and symbolism predominates in plays such as *The Glittering Gate.* His greatest triumph has so far been that peculiar work entitled *If,* a fantasy which reminds us both of Mr Martyn's union of realism and the supernatural and of Sir James Barrie's *Dear Brutus.* The theme is, as with these plays, one of possibilities. "Let us," says Lord Dunsany in much the same spirit of fantasy, "let us imagine a certain John Beal, an ordinary, commonplace Londoner. Carry him back to any point in his life. Suppose he did something ever so little differently from the way he did do it. What might not have happened to him?" So we are taken back to an ordinary railway-station, and John Beal catches that train which he missed. Quite an ordinary thing, such as happens to every man. For Lord Dunsany, however, character is not destiny. Accidents to shape life, and John Beal is carried from one thing to another till he finds himself a chieftain king in the depths of Persia, wielding powers of life and death. Adventure surrounds him; he is grown from a commonplace business man into a being of romance. Sir James Barrie's *Dear Brutus* appeared in 1917; is it too much to suppose that *If* (1921) was written as an antidote to the former's philosophy of character?

(v) The Poetic Play

In dealing with the symbolic drama it may not be unfitting here to consider the development of the poetic play, which frequently, but not always, takes on features of a mystic or suggestive kind. This poetic drama, after suffering some decay in the last years of the nineteenth century, when its only true representative seemed to be the mystical Mr Yeats, revived in the hands of Stephen Phillips, whose death in 1915 proved a real blow to the theatre. His first true triumph was *Paolo and Francesca,* a verse tragedy which was published in 1900, and his later plays—*Herod* (1900), *Ulysses* (1902), *The Sin of David* (1904), and *Nero* (1906)—only added to his fame, although with the passage of the years certain flaws were noted in his work which in the first flush of his success had passed unobserved. The apparently brilliant dramatic power was seen to have melodramatic features; the characters seemed not to have that subtlety with which at first they were thought to be invested. Whatever flaws might be discovered in his work, on the other hand, he was acknowledged, and is still acknowledged, as one of the masters of poetic tragedy. To a truly melodious utterance he adds, what so many of the nineteenth-century poets lacked, a genuine *flair* for the theatre. He had honestly studied the technique of his craft, and his tragedies are thus well conceived and well developed. From both the literary and the theatrical point of view his greatest achievement was, perhaps, his earliest production, *Paolo and Francesca.* Taking the poignant tale of ages past as it was told by Dante in his *Inferno,* with all its beautiful pathos, he has clothed it with life. He has retained something of the exquisite torment expressed in Dante's lines. Stephen Phillips' work seems almost a union of Dante's high spirit and of Maeterlinck's symbolism. Fate hangs over the lovers, and there is something truly tragic in the position of the husband, adoring both the lovers, yet raging with hate. He is another Golaud placed between the worlds of ordinary life and of spiritual fire. The manner in which the three main figures

are developed, and particularly the subtle touches given to the character of the husband, entitle the creator of this play to a well-merited position among the first of our poetic playwrights.

The poetic drama has been taken up by a number of other twentieth-century authors. Mr Masefield, besides his prose *Tragedy of Nan,* has penned his rimed *Philip the King* (1914), on the theme of the Armada, and *Good Friday* (1917), which returns to the days of Christ. His Japanese tragedy of revenge, *The Faithful* (1915), has a distinctly lyrical note intensified by the many songs introduced in the course of the development. This last play, as well as the other two, lies rather outside of the general movement in the theatre. However neo-classical our age is becoming it is hardly likely that we shall adopt the rimed couplet as a medium for the expression of tragedy. Mr Masefield's dramas, therefore, beautiful as they are, will in all probability remain only interesting experiments in long-lost and antiquated forms.

More, perhaps, may be said for the much-advertised work of J. E. Flecker. *Hassan,* published in 1922, was performed in 1923, with gorgeous scenery and the plentiful introduction of ballet and music. In some ways it deserves praise as a piece of literature, there being unquestionably an atmosphere of poetry throughout the whole; but as a drama it is negligible. Fundamentally it is but a *Chu Chin Chow* made more glorious. The Eastern setting may charm, but the characters are crudely drawn and the situations are forced. Perhaps a certain romantic intensity envelops the figures of Rafi, King of the Beggars, and the slave-girl, Pervaneh, but these cannot raise the whole to the levels of high art. The ridiculous buffoonery of Hassan, the unmitigated savagery of Haroun, the idealistic rapture of the poet Ishak, and the love-passion of the two forlorn figures whose tortured screams are heard in the last act make the poem a mere patchwork of heterogeneous elements without harmony and without form. *Hassan,* save for its poetic elements (not by any means always dramatic), must be placed alongside and hardly above other Eastern fantasia,

of which Edward Knoblock's *Kismet* (1912) was the best known and the most popular. The spectacular play still makes periodic efforts to rise to that position it occupied in the early nineteenth century, as is witnessed by the recently produced *Decameron Nights,* but it will always remain a trivial form of dramatic effort.

Without these spectacular features Mr John Drinkwater has, in recent years, re-established the poetic play as a dominant force in the theatre. Following the line of Mr Masefield, he has concentrated his efforts chiefly on historical drama, writing both in verse and in prose. This sphere he has discovered only in the later stages of his career. His first important play, *Rebellion* (1914), and those which immediately followed—*The Storm* (1915), *The God of Quiet* (1916), and *X = O: A Night of the Trojan War* (1917)—are all concerned with human passions of a romantic fictional sort. *The Storm* is one of the most arresting of these. It reminds us in some way of Synge's *Riders to the Sea,* by which it may not have been uninfluenced. The scene is a cottage in the mountains. Snow is falling, and the storm with every moment sweeps down more fiercely. Outside, Alice's husband is tending his flock. Old Sarah knows what it all means, just as Maurya knew. Nature is taking its toll of human lives. Out of the sweep of the wind and the lashing of the blizzard comes a strong, healthy tourist. All this is a jest to him. He has battled through and joys in the struggle. But for old Sarah and for Alice, vainly waiting, waiting till the searchers return baffled by the snowfall, there is nothing but misery. It may be good for the young traveller to laugh at his struggles, but the shepherd lies wrapped in his white cere-cloth of snow, and for the women there are only tears left and sorrow.

Rebellion is more allegorical and more legendary. In an ideal land there lives old King Phane, a tyrant, but a tyrant just to his own faith. The people are restive, and in the poet Narros they discover their leader. His songs and his words excite them to action, and a revolt is planned. But Narros is smitten with romantic love for the Queen, Shubia, and he deserts his companions at the most critical

hour in order to meet her at a trysting place. His inspiration is gone from the ranks of the rebels, and they are defeated. Narros himself is captured and condemned to death. Another and a more successful revolt is planned; King Phane is deposed, but with him goes Shubia, the Queen. Narros has achieved one of his ends, but that love which seemed to consume his whole life is shattered. The conflict of political passion with that more primeval passion of love is here well developed, and the drama takes shape as a struggle of eternal principles in the human soul.

X = O is likewise allegorical. During a night of the Trojan War two Grecian friends, Pronax and Salvius, and two Trojan friends, Ilus and Capys, sit on the outskirts of their respective encampments. The first scene introduces us to the former pair. It is Pronax' duty to go by night to the Trojan walls in search of human prey. He sets off into the darkness, more than half loathing his work, leaving Salvius deeply immersed in a book. The second scene shows us the wall of Troy. It is the duty of Ilus to prowl round the Grecian camp in case he may be lucky enough to stab some straggler. He descends by a rope, and leaves Capys singing a ditty. In the midst of it Pronax stabs him to the heart. The third scene shows us Ilus in the tent of Salvius. Silently he stabs the Greek soldier and makes his departure. A moment or two later Pronax returns, and talks as though Salvius were alive:

Pronax. What, still awake, and reading? Those are rare songs,
To keep a soldier out of his bed at night.
Ugh—Salvius, sometimes it's horrible—
He had no time for a word—he walked those walls
Under the stars as a lover might walk a garden
Among the moonlit roses—this cleansing's good—
He was saying some verses, I think, till death broke in.
Cold water's good after this pitiful doing,
And freshens the mind for comfortable sleep.
Well, there, it's done, and sleep's a mighty curer
For all vexations. [*The sentinel passes.*
It's time that torch was out—
I do not need it, and you should be abed. . . .

Salvius . . . [*He looks into the tent for the first time.*
What, sleeping, and still dressed?
That's careless, friend, and the torch alight still. . . . Salvius . . .
Salvius, I say . . . gods! . . . what, friend . . . Salvius, Salvius . . .
Dead . . . it is done . . . it is done . . . there is judgment made
Beauty is broken . . . and there on the Trojan wall
One too shall come . . . one too shall come . . .
[*The sentinel passes.*

CURTAIN

The fourth and last scene is silent. It presents:

The Trojan wall. The body of Capys lies in the starlight and silence. After a few moments the signal comes from Ilus below. There is a pause. The signal is repeated. There is a pause.

CURTAIN

None of these plays won any great success. Mr Drinkwater's triumph came when he produced *Abraham Lincoln* in 1918, and followed that with *Mary Stuart* (1921; revised 1922), *Oliver Cromwell* (1922), and *Robert E. Lee* (1923). With these the chronicle history seemed to be revived again. The multiplicity of individually delineated characters dominated by the one master-figure seems a conception borrowed from Elizabethan days. Yet *Abraham Lincoln* and the other kindred dramas are not mere chronicle plays. In essence they are plays of ideas. If $X = O$ is an almost bitter attack upon war, *Abraham Lincoln* shows the high-souled effort to achieve freedom even by the means of that which Lincoln in his soul abhorred, the cruel agony of battle. War for him is not a thing of hate. It is to be pursued resolutely, but not vindictively, and its end is not the crushing of the enemy, but the raising of a new understanding born out of the turmoil of the conflict. *Oliver Cromwell* and *Robert E. Lee* likewise subordinate the presentation of history to a formal problem, and in *Mary Stuart* we have a subtle study of a more social question, that of woman's, or of a woman's, soul. For Mr Drinkwater there are some women who have hearts so wide, who have ideals so high, that they cannot find any one man great enough to satisfy their soul's love. In the

Induction a young husband is telling with grief to an elderly and world-wise friend how his wife, although she seems to love him, pours out love to another as well. As they are speaking together the modern scene fades away, and we are in the presence of the unhappy Mary Queen of Scots. She is one of these women. Darnley and Bothwell and Rizzio are merely portions of that larger whole for which she craves. She desires strength and beauty and passion; perhaps she finds one of these qualities in one of her lovers, another in another, but never has she discovered all in one man. She is not fickle and faithless; it is simply that her ideal is too high for human attainment.

In this last play Mr Drinkwater employs something of the supernatural atmosphere which is coming to take such a hold of the modern theatre, but in doing so he has succeeded in creating a novel form for the expression of those many problems which face us in life and which are continually clamouring for our attention. This, probably, is his subtlest drama.

Poetic and romantic features dominate, too, the plays of Mr Lascelles Abercrombie, whose *Deborah* was published in 1913, and who has won deserved fame through that drama and through his later production—*The Adder* (1913), *The End of the World* (1914), *The Staircase* (1920), *The Deserter* (1922), and *Phœnix* (1923), a comedy. Mr Abercrombie's romanticism is, like Mr Drinkwater's, deeply coloured by contact with reality. He is not another singer of fairyland, but one who endeavours to express in terms of poetry the deepest emotions of this our terrestrial existence. What so far he lacks is dominance of purpose and interweaving of dialogue and movement. It is not that his plays, like some of those by Mr Yeats, are so melodiously beautiful that we are lost in the veil of loveliness and cannot see clearly the forms around us. Mr Abercrombie's poetry is rather distinguished by its strong but somewhat crude resonance. The failure lies in inability to appreciate fully the purposes of the theatre. Undoubtedly his plays, though powerful, drag at times, and rarely is there that concentrated effort which makes for greatness in the

realm of tragedy. Instead of being driven to the intensity of a single emotion our passions are allowed to wander over a whole series of planes, so that of central impression there is little. We may permit this in purely fanciful works of the poetic imagination, but in dramas which take their being from the life of the people unity of purpose and concentration of aim seem to be essential.

Mr Gordon Bottomley, author of *The Crier by Night* (published 1902, acted 1916), *Midsummer Eve* (1905), *Laodice and Danaë* (1909), *The Riding to Lithend* (1909), *King Lear's Wife* (1915), *Gruach* (printed 1921, acted 1923), and *Britain's Daughter* (1922), is more in harmony with the spirit of Mr Yeats and the other fanciful poetic dramatists. His inventiveness is marvellous and his power of suggestion supreme. Shadowy forms move out before us from the darkness of night and fade away again into the mystery out of which they were born. It is not, however, only the mysterious with which Mr Bottomley has dealt. Possibly his two most powerful dramas are *King Lear's Wife* and *Gruach,* in which he has taken the daring road of Shakespeare interpretation. Both endeavour to get behind Shakespearian tragedies and provide a basis from which these tragedies develop. In the former an effort is made to account for the characters of Lear, Goneril, and Cordelia. Lear is shown to us as a rather wilful, amorous old monarch. He has grown wearied of his aged queen, Hygd, and taken into his house the common and vulgar Gormflaith. The Queen, highly strung and sensitive, suffers under his injustice and dies; but Goneril, who is a virtuous and somewhat chill Diana, catches something of high purpose in her desire for vengeance. In bitterness she slays Gormflaith, who is discovered to be nothing but a mean prostitute. It is bitterness that dominates the play, bitterness in Lear and in Goneril, bitterness in the miserable death of Queen Hygd. Cordelia moves through it all, a pampered child with no inner beauty of character, ruined by too great kindliness and licence. While we need not accept Mr Bottomley's reconstruction we cannot deny that his play has strength and character in it, or that the theme is fresh and original.

The same qualities of freshness and strength are to be seen in *Gruach,* which purports to delineate the early life of Lady Macbeth. The young girl, reared in the barrenness of a Scottish fortress, pines for the joy of life. She is about to be married to a man whom she despises, when there arrives at the castle a youthful courtier and soldier, none other than Macbeth. In him she finds what she has been seeking, and the two take flight together. Here Mr Bottomley has taken the Lady Macbeth we know and shown her as she might have been in earlier life—not a cruel, embittered girl, but one full of life, ambitious and striving after she knows not what. It is easy to see that with age these qualities may become exaggerated and warped, developing into the terrible figure of the murderous hostess of Shakespeare's play.

So the poetic and symbolic drama has developed in late years, showing three marked movements in its general course—that toward the supernatural and fairy world, that toward historical themes, and that toward the poetic treatment of real life. It is probably in a union of realism and fantasy that the drama of the next few years will discover its greatest strength. The *bourgeois* tragedy aids in the development of the first, and the increased sensitiveness as well as the recent psychic and psychological investigations well-nigh demands the second. We are at that peculiar stage in the development of civilization when things seen and unseen appear to meet, when an awakened intellect calls us toward the problems of life, and when a higher imagination drives us to contemplate the infinitude of space and the mystery of the stars.

CHAPTER VI

THE REVIVAL OF THE COMEDY OF MANNERS AND OF SATIRIC COMEDY

W. S. Gilbert and Oscar Wilde

IT is somewhat peculiar that, in spite of the mystical and seriously bitter tendencies visible in the works of Mr Yeats and of Mr Galsworthy respectively, the modern age should have seen a marked revival of comedy, sometimes of a frankly hilarious kind, more frequently indulging in witty satire. The poets of this period are not so gloomily or so idealistically serious as the poets of the Romantic era. Synge, Mr H. A. Jones, Sir Arthur Pinero, Mr Yeats, Mr Galsworthy, all know the gift of laughter, and can turn from themes predominatingly tragic to the realm of comedy. This in itself marks a great advance in drama. Socrates, or Plato, was unquestionably right in finding the sources of tragedy and of comedy nearly allied, and in declaring that the great poet of the one type must necessarily have in him the qualities essential for success in the other. Indeed, there might be added to the reasons of dramatic decline in the early nineteenth century the fact that the poets knew not how to laugh. The predominating feature of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and Tennyson is their consistent seriousness. They took themselves and all the world seriously, and smiled gravely if they smiled at all. If Wordsworth tries for a moment to be sportive he becomes ridiculously commonplace; if Shelley tries to write a humorous piece, such as *Œdipus Tyrannus,* he becomes inexpressibly coarse. Only the lesser men of the time, such as Lamb and Hood, knew what it was to see the folly of life and the eternal discrepancy between ideal and realization.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century we see this coarseness and almost indecent sportiveness giving way

to a healthier tone. T. W. Robertson heralds its coming, just as he heralds the arrival of the problem play, and it rises to a culmination in the work of William S. Gilbert and of Oscar Wilde. The one adopted as the favourite medium for the expression of his ideas the comic opera, the other occupied the realm of regular comedy, but both are definitely intellectual, satirical, and witty. Both belong to the tradition of the comedy of manners, revived by Sheridan, and largely forgotten in an age of romantic enthusiasm and impossible ideality.

Among Gilbert's early works is included the not very brilliant comedy *Sweethearts* (1874), but his sphere was not that of the regular comic form. His tendencies were cynical, satirical, and witty, with a decided leaning toward burlesque. He can see the opposite side of the picture as the romantic poets could not see it, and accordingly he is able to present to us the delightfully sparkling, but not always tasteful, *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1871) and *Gretchen* (1879), wherein classical legend and modern poetic endeavour respectively are satirized. It is not always recognized by those who flock to *The Mikado* (1885), *The Pirates of Penzance* (1878), or *Patience* (1884) that there was in Gilbert's nature more than a faint undercurrent of bitterness. His light verses and his jovial banter helped to conceal it from the Savoyards, but it is clearly apparent in his earlier plays and occasionally intrudes in the later. Perhaps his fundamental purpose was to raise a laugh, but he desired it to be a laugh under which lay the sting of the satirical touch. Even such a delightfully fantastic opera as *Patience* exhibits this. The cult of the sunflower and the velvet breeches has now long passed away, but it was quite a fashionable thing in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Gilbert's satire of it reminds us of the satire of Restoration times, even as his wit sometimes has a flavour of Congreve's style. This revival of Restoration atmosphere links Gilbert to his age, and, even although we recognize that his precise medium is inimitable, we must realize that he has a considerable influence upon his contemporaries. He killed the full flower, now too full blown, of the romantic

comic opera, substituting in its stead this satiric style of his own. Though there was none to carry on his work he aided in dethroning an artificial imagination in favour of a fanciful realism.

For a moment it may seem strange that the author of *Salome,* the leader of the "Art for Art's sake" cult, and the chief butt for Gilbert's satire in *Patience,* should have stood alongside of Gilbert in establishing this reign of realism in the theatre. The strangeness, however, may be paralleled in other times. Oscar Wilde is only Abraham Cowley *redivivus.* Just as Cowley, in an age of outworn romanticism, proved himself at one and the same time the leader of the metaphysical school in its last stages of decay and the inaugurator of the new age of reason and of heroic couplets, so Wilde in his poetry represents all that is worst in decadent romanticism, and in his comedies all that is vital in the rising comedy of manners. His serious works for the theatre are of little value, the silly *Vera, or, The Nihilists* (1883), the decadent *Duchess of Padua* (1891), and the notorious *Salome* (1892); it is his comedies that must claim the attention of any historian of the theatre. These comedies started with *Lady Windemere's Fan* (1892), continued with *A Woman of No Importance* (1893) and *An Ideal Husband* (1895), and finished with *The Importance of being Earnest* (1895). These plays, it is true, are not by any means purely intellectual. Several of them, in particular the first two, are filled with sentimentalism of the worst type and introduce problems of social life. In *Lady Windermere's Fan* we find that Lord Windermere has married a high-spirited and proud girl, who is, although she is unaware of the fact, the daughter of Mrs Erlynne, a woman of sullied life but humane feeling. Mrs Erlynne, who has been blackmailing the unfortunate lord, demands to be invited to a party at his house, but his wife, who has heard gossip about the two, flares into a passion. She declares that she will strike Mrs Erlynne with her fan should she make her appearance at the party. Her courage, or her better feelings, prevents her from creating a public scandal, but her pride will not suffer her to live longer

with her husband. She writes him a note and slips off to the bachelor rooms of a man who had professed himself her lover. Mrs Erlynne finds the letter, and, guessing the truth, opens it. Her horror is increased when she realizes that this is her own story over again. Frantic with fear she hurries off, and discovers her daughter alone in the room of her lover. Vainly for a time she argues with her; but at last she arouses the spirit of Lady Windermere and gets her away. She herself steps behind a curtain. A party of gay aristocrats enters the room. One of these spies the fan, and they are proceeding to jest on Lady Windermere's attachment for their friend, when Mrs Erlynne, conquering her own pride, steps forward and claims the fan as her own. It is the sacrifice which she can make for her daughter's honour. So, too, in *A Woman of No Importance* the theme is one eminently pathetic and sentimental, the unfortunate Mrs Arbuthnot claiming our full sympathy. *An Ideal Husband* is little less of a problem drama flavoured with sentimental motives.

All of these serious themes, however, Wilde has clothed with a profusion of wit. His paradoxes follow one another in swift volleys. He attempts to charm as Congreve did in 1700. The peculiar thing is that somehow he made the two elements unite together. Sentimentalism killed the comedy of manners in the early eighteenth century, but it does not destroy Wilde's similar gaiety. It may be that nowadays we have grown a trifle tired of the paradoxes and verbal sallies which are associated with the names of Wilde and of Whistler, the excessive brilliance of scintillating if not intellectually profound minds, but for all that Wilde's plays will remain stock pieces in our theatres. There is something permanent in them, and they can never be relegated to oblivion. *The Importance of being Earnest* is a delightfully fantastic paradox of a plot, enlivened by brilliant dialogue, and even the more serious dramas possess a decided originality in treatment and in theme. Artificial they may be, but artificiality has always been a distinguishing mark of the comedy of manners.

(ii) George Bernard Shaw

It is observable that this age, even as the Augustan period, delights in wit, in repartee, and paradox. The brilliant verbal fantasies of Mr Chesterton and of Mr Bernard Shaw are as pleasing to our ears as the sallies of Congreve were to the gallants at the end of the seventeenth century. We may be too serious now to accept comedy without some slight elements of social purpose, but the two moods are fundamentally the same. Of the masters of this style none is greater than Mr George Bernard Shaw, who came upon the dramatic horizon with *Widowers' Houses* in 1892, and since then by slow degrees has succeeded in establishing himself as the chief playwright of modern times. His thirty-six plays and playlets may not all be on one level, but no man in our own time has sustained such a freshness and vitality as he. Even at the age of sixty-eight he has startled the conventionalists in literature and philosophy by his strange *Back to Methuselah* (published 1921, acted 1922) and has given a new note to his art in the historical play *Saint Joan* (1923).

The keynotes to Mr Shaw's work are intellect and rebellion. Whatever is sentimental and romantic he despises as false. Whatever is contrary to the dictates of reason he opposes. Whatever is set up as a fetish by the unthinking mass he ruthlessly destroys. His socialism is not of the emotional kind. He is not inspired with a great pity for 'the under-dog' as Mr Galsworthy is. Rather does he look round him, and witnessing the many follies in our management of life he strives to remedy the abuses, not by serious problem plays, but by turning topsy-turvy our social state. Sir James Barrie delights in revealing the other side of the picture, not for any social purpose, but simply because it amuses him. Mr Shaw loves to show that other side in order that he may point a moral. Complacency and romantic artificiality are his *bêtes noires*. He objects to the typical assumptions of the sentimental dramatists just as much as he objects to the typical assumptions of the sentimentalists in real life. Everything, therefore,

comes within the sphere of his caustic pen—literature, art, medicine, religion, politics, racial prejudice, social standards. He is the great destroyer of evil in our modern age, and out of his destructiveness we are led toward a newer, fresher, and more constructive thought.

The weapon which Mr Shaw uses with greatest precision is the weapon of satire. He is ruthless and he cuts deep. There is for him no question of compromise or of sparing. Like most satirists Mr Shaw has moved from a more or less normal world to a world of fantasy. He starts with *The Philanderer* (acted 1898; printed 1905) and *Candida* (1895), and moves through *Androcles and the Lion* (1913) to *The Inca of Perusalem* (1917), *Annajanska, the Bolshevik Empress* (1918), and *Back to Methuselah*. Whether *Saint Joan* marks the beginning of a new style in his work only he can say. In analysing this satirical strain and its gradual development, it is almost impossible for us, in Mr Shaw's own presence and in such close proximity to those things against which he tilts, to formulate any exhaustive or final summary of his position in the history of drama and of thought. Many men have said profound or witty things about Mr Shaw, but time only can place him in that particular position in the development of the theatre which it is his to fill. All that may be done here is to glance at one or two of his chief plays in the hope that we may find some common qualities to aid us in the estimate of his work.

Widowers' Houses, Mrs Warren's Profession (1898; printed 1902), and one or two others of his works belong almost solely to the sphere of the problem play. In the first he attacks that chief evil in our cities, the slum-tenement, but the play is not merely a one-sided assault at a national disgrace. Mr Shaw looks deeper than most. He sees the enormous complexity of our modern civilization. It is no longer, as the romanticists thought, a story of evil landlords and oppressed poverty. Such a statement of the case, to Mr Shaw, seems not only inadequate but ridiculous, not only false but positively mischief-making. If we are to think of reforming the slums we must

strike deeper than the landlord; we must go to the roots of society itself. Accordingly, he takes as his hero one Trench, who objects to the dowry of his *fiancée,* Blanche Sartorius, because it has come from the rents torn out of the hands of the poor. Trench is an idealist, but he has to face cold reality when he finds that his own money is largely tainted by the same evils against which he battled. Gradually he is drawn into the net, and at the close of the play he is plotting with Sartorius and his rent-collector to secure more money on his property. The same pitiless exposure of real facts is poured into *Mrs Warren's Profession,* a drama which takes as its theme the question of prostitution. Dragging away one by one the veils which have been cast over this subject by idealistic romanticists and by men of the world alike, Mr Shaw tries to regard it in the light of reason, and finds the only solution in banishing emotion and sentimentalism, in cutting out of life all the romantic glow which so often clothes foul brutality, in establishing a new age of intellect and of logical thought. So he passes from one theme to another. In *Arms and the Man* (1894) it is war and romantic soldiering he would tilt against. Even then he could see that war was no longer a thing of banners and glory, such a thing as Tamburlaine and Othello and Sir Walter Scott saw it, but a dull, sordid affair of brute strength and callous planning out. The Bulgarian Sergius is the representative of an outworn convention, and Captain Bluntschli, the Swiss matter-of-fact warrior, is the symbol of present-day conditions. *Candida* carries us back to domestic problems. A good-looking, but somewhat elderly, woman is adored by a foolishly poetic youth. Her husband, a philanthropic and energetic clergyman, is thrown into despair, for he thinks that poetry may win the day. But Candida gives herself to him who is weakest, and the weakest is her husband.

Thus does Mr Shaw pass through the whole gallery of stock portraits, portraits of warriors, of philanthropists, of poets, of tyrants, of rent-collectors, and, turning the canvases on the wall, he shows that some impish artist has painted a reverse on every one, and the reverse is nearer

to life than the long-treasured and long-admired obverse. Coming to history, he takes Napoleon and the great Queen of Egypt, the glorious lover who will give her whole life for passion, and he shows them both as ordinary man and woman. Napoleon in *The Man of Destiny* (1897) is nothing more than a successful captain, easily attracted by a pair of bold eyes; Cleopatra in *Cæsar and Cleopatra* (1899) is no more than a little madcap of a girl, tyrannized over by an old nurse, and the conqueror of the world has only cunning and sagacity to bear him through many trials. Perhaps Mr Shaw has taken a hint here from Shakespeare's earlier satire in *Troilus and Cressida.* And then there is the convention of man's strength and of woman's weakness, the eternal courtship and wooing, the man's question and the woman's bashful answer. "Is this really so?" is Mr Shaw's query, and in *Man and Superman* (1903) he strives to show it is not. With exquisite fancy he takes Don Juan as his hero, and attempts to display the other (and real) portrait of that voluptuary and ruiner of women. The main part of the story tells how Ann, driven by the life force, drives Jack Tanner, the revolutionary and free-thinker, to marriage. Tanner knows perfectly well what she is about, although the poetic Octavius would still regard woman as an angel sent from on high. Poor little "Ricky-ticky-tavy" gets the worst of it, or, as Tanner would have said, the best of it. Ann, although she may play with him as a cat plays with a mouse, wants Tanner himself, and even a modern automobile with the good services of the Cockney chauffeur, Enry Straker, cannot save him. Tanner and Octavius are set in close opposition. The one is the clear-eyed modernist, the other the romantic poet:

> *Octavius.* I cannot write without inspiration. And nobody can give me that except Ann.
>
> *Tanner.* Well, hadnt you better get it from her at a safe distance? Petrarch didnt see half as much of Laura, nor Dante of Beatrice, as you see of Ann now; and yet they wrote first-rate poetry—at least so Im told. They never exposed their idolatry to the test of domestic familiarity; and it lasted them to their graves. Marry Ann; and at the end of a week youll find no more inspiration in her than in a plate of muffins.

Octavius. You think I shall tire of her!

Tanner. Not at all: you dont get tired of muffins. But you dont find inspiration in them; and you wont in her when she ceases to be a poet's dream and becomes a solid eleven-stone wife. Youll be forced to dream about somebody else; and then there will be a row.

Octavius. This sort of talk is no use, Jack. You dont understand. You have never been in love.

Tanner. I! I have never been out of it. Why, I am in love even with Ann. But I am neither the slave of love or its dupe. Go to the bee, thou poet: consider her ways and be wise. By Heaven, Tavy, if women could do without our work, and we ate their children's bread instead of making it, they would kill us as the spider kills her mate or as the bees kill the drone. And they would be right if we were good for nothing but love.

In the end Tanner is captured. Ann marries him even as he protests solemnly that he is not a happy man. The realism of this play is cleverly interwoven with some purely fantastic elements. Tanner and Straker are captured by some brigands as they motor over the mountains, and in the evening, as we listen to Mendoza's nonsensical rimes:

O wert thou, Louisa,
The wife of Mendoza,
Mendoza's Louisa, Louisa Mendoza,
How blest were the life of Louisa's Mendoza!
How painless his longing of love for Louisa!

we fall asleep, and dream of a place where there is "no sky, no peaks, no light, no sound, no time nor space, utter void." We are in hell, conversing with Don Juan (who is startlingly like Jack Tanner), the statue which caused his death, and the devil. Don Juan is the embodiment of the intellectual philosophy of life. Reason for him is predominant:

That is why intellect is so unpopular. But to Life, the force behind the Man, intellect is a necessity, because without it he blunders into death. Just as Life, after ages of struggle, evolved that wonderful bodily organ the eye, so that the living organism could see where it was going and what was coming to help or threaten it, and thus avoid a thousand dangers that formerly slew it, so it is evolving to-day a mind's eye that shall see, not the physical world, but the purpose of Life, and thereby enable the individual to work for that purpose instead of thwarting and

> baffling it by setting up shortsighted personal aims as at present. Even as it is, only one sort of man has ever been happy, has ever been universally respected among all the conflicts of interests and illusions . . . the philosophic man: he who seeks in contemplation to discover the inner will of the world, in invention to discover the means of fulfilling that will, and in action to do that will by the so-discovered means.

The philosophic man is Mr Shaw's ideal; he has lately shown us his own constructive view of life in *Back to Methuselah.*

It is impossible here to do more than mention some of the innumerable facets of existence which Mr Shaw has illuminated with his satire and his vision. In *The Devil's Disciple* (1897) and *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet* (1909) he has taken religion for his theme, varying his treatment of that theme in *Major Barbara* (1905). *The Devil's Disciple* is a delicious satire at once of romantic melodrama and of puritanical faith hardened into mere convention. The devil's disciple, for all his irreligious and blasphemous utterances, is the only one among the crowd of canting sinners who has a glimpse of diviner fire in him. Even the minister-husband is more of a soldier than a servant of peace. This play is especially noteworthy for the interesting portrait it contains of General Burgoyne, soldier, playwright, and wit of the late eighteenth century. In *John Bull's Other Island* (1904) Mr Shaw turns good-humouredly to banter both English and Irish prejudices. He can see the follies of both, and again he casts the pure light of reason upon a problem complicated by English insularity and Irish passion and idealism. *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906) casts the same cold searchlight upon the medical profession. "Strip off all sentimentality," the author again cries; "judge things as they are, not as they might or ought to be; only so can you achieve salvation." *Getting Married* (1908) throws equal ridicule, instinct with sense and reason, upon the discrepancies of our marriage system, and *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* (1910), trivial as it is, is full of shrewd wit and comment on a problem made hazy and bewildering by a mass of romantic critics. *Androcles and the Lion* (1913) preaches the moral of toler-

ance to both sides, and *Pygmalion* (1913) is a brilliant study of social conventions. Finally we come to the darker *Heartbreak House* (1919; acted 1921), in which only too clearly is to be seen the new spirit inspired by the horror of the War, and *Saint Joan,* which recaptures some of Mr Shaw's old bantering wit in its humorous epilogue, and sheds brilliant light upon the historical atmosphere of the Middle Ages.[1]

In all this intellectual treatment of literature, of history, and of social life the prime thing we note is the penetrating vision of the writer. There is no stopping for him halfway; he is brave enough to carry his sight as far as it will reach. The unknown terrors bring no fear to him; he is calm and restrained in the consciousness of his own intellectual eminence. It is not too much to say that intellectually he bestrides our modern thought like a colossus. Filled with a deep horror of misery, imbued with a sense of the unhealthiness and abject poverty, mental and physical, of the slums, he does not find solace in a weak humanitarianism or an equally weak sentimental philanthropy. He pierces down below the surface and sees that a Trench and a Major Barbara are of no avail, and that even these must bow to take sustenance from the things they despise. The great constructive element in his work is not his philosophy of age, as expressed in *Back to Methuselah,* but this inimitable power of searching to the very roots of things for the causes of decay and disintegration. Whereas others would be content to nip off a withered bud or to give a spray of disinfectant, Mr Shaw desires to transplant and give a change of soil.

From the literary point of view Mr Shaw's drama means a great deal to the English theatre. Not only has he taught a new incisiveness of utterance, and given what is virtually a new dramatic dialogue, but he has also provided a fresh principle of characterization. The characters in the romantic plays were not so much stereotyped as framed

[1] Personally, I cannot accept *Saint Joan* as Mr Bernard Shaw's masterpiece. It contains brilliantly written scenes, but lacks the true spirit which illuminates his earlier plays.

on a false principle. Mr Shaw has shown men how to draw characters according to the dictates of reason. Instead of timid heroines, we find intellectually daring women; instead of strong heroes, men lacking power and self-will; instead of fantastically model clergymen, ministers who feel more at ease in buff-coat and jack-boots; instead of impossible villains, men who are themselves the tools of society. Even beyond this the debt of the modern drama to him is great. He showed new methods of fusing fantasy and reality; he was constantly experimenting in fresh dramatic devices. Above all, he made the drama, more than ever it had been before, literature. Without taking away from the theatrical quality of his work, he added to stage direction and to preface such additional matter that even in the study his works take shape before us. Seeing the rivalry of the novel, he has dared to step into the enemy's camp and take from him some of his most jealously guarded devices. It is not only that Mr Shaw gives us more details than are commonly given concerning the settings of his plays; he goes into the past history of his characters. Thus, at the opening of *Man and Superman*, we are treated to a full-length picture of Roebuck Ramsden seated in his study. Chairs and tables, neckties and waistcoats, are described to us, and then:

> *He has not been out of doors yet to-day! so he still wears his slippers, his boots being ready for him on the hearthrug. Surmising that he has no valet, and seeing that he has no secretary with a shorthand notebook and a typewriter, one meditates on how little our great burgess domesticity has been disturbed by new fashions and methods, or by the enterprise of the railway and hotel companies which sell you a Saturday to Monday of life at Folkestone as a real gentleman for two guineas, first class fares both ways included.*
>
> *How old is Roebuck? The question is important on the threshold of a drama of ideas; for under such circumstances everything depends on whether his adolescence belonged to the sixties or to the eighties. He was born, as a matter of fact, in* 1839, *and was a Unitarian and Free Trader from his boyhood, and an Evolutionist from the publication of the Origin of Species. Consequently he has always classed himself as an advanced thinker and fearlessly outspoken reformer.*

It is unquestionable that this device has added to the

popularity of drama. After a few years of hesitancy in the publishing of plays,[1] the newer writers sought for a double public. Without ignoring the theatre, as the poets of the past had done, they made an appeal also to the many readers of novels and of poetry. Their stage directions and their prefaces alike were penned for this purpose, and as a consequence the drama as a whole became ever more and more a part of literature. In thus re-establishing the literary drama the modern writers were striking out and away from the trivial and vain romantic theatre of the preceding decades, and their work owes a tremendous debt to the activity and boldness of Mr Shaw, whose *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* (1898) and *Plays for Puritans* (1900) fully established the drama alongside of the novel as a popular literary form.

In thus noting what has become a general modern tendency, we must observe certain disadvantages attendant upon it. While Mr Shaw's stage directions are not meant to serve quite the same purpose as those in Mr Hardy's *Dynasts,* which was "intended simply for mental performance and not for the stage," it is inevitable that they should tend toward a loss of power in the dialogue of the play. When a dramatist finds he can express his thoughts through the preface and through the stage directions he may very possibly be led into avoiding the more subtle and more difficult method of revealing them through the words of his characters, and he may be drawn still farther to the introduction of scenes unfitted for the theatre. Sir James Barrie perhaps shows a still completer development of this tendency. Not content with elaborating the stage direction, he couches his whole drama in the form of a narrative, banishing altogether the stage directions of Mr Shaw's fancy and putting the language of his characters into inverted commas as though he were penning a novel. The result is to be seen in *The Old Lady shows her Medals* (1917), in which we get a final scene entirely unsuited for

[1] Owing to the fact that there was no copyright convention with the United States of America, many dramatists in the eighties refused to publish their works. The agreement of 1891 removed all difficulties.

stage performance. The play once more is being led away from the theatre. Mr Granville Barker too has succumbed to this only too fatally easy device. In *The Madras House* he introduces one of his characters thus:

> *Philip's wife is an epitome of all that æsthetic culture can do for a woman. More: she is the result—not of thirty-three years—but of three or four generations of refinement. She might be a race-horse! Come to think of it, it is a very wonderful thing to have raised this crop of ladyhood. Creatures, dainty in mind and body, gentle in thought and word, charming, delicate, sensitive, chaste, credulous of all good, shaming the world's ugliness and strife by the very ease and delightsomeness of their existence; fastidious—fastidious—fastidious! also in these latter years with their attractions more generally salted by the addition of learning and humour. Is not the perfect lady perhaps the most wonderful achievement of civilization, and worth the cost of her breeding, worth the toil and the helotage of all the others?*

The problem is a serious one. Mr Shaw and Mr Barker are such masters of their craft that they retain dramatic force even with all this supernumerary comment and explanation; but what of the others? Will it not lead men once more to forget the theatre, that from which drama inevitably springs, and with which fundamentally it is bound up? Could we be sure that all playwrights penned their dialogue first, and the comment later, all would be well; but only too often in modern theatrical work we feel that the writer, failing to express his meaning through the words of his characters, falls back upon this easier, because more direct, method of explaining his purposes.

(iii) Henry Arthur Jones and others

From this digression into a tendency in modern playprinting a return must be made to the study of the development of comedy in the last twenty or thirty years. The comedy of manners, using wit and satire as its chief media, was cultivated by many writers besides those just mentioned. Mr Henry Arthur Jones will be remembered not only for *Saints and Sinners,* but for *The Masqueraders* (1894) and

for *The Liars* (1897). Neither is a pure comedy; as in Mr Shaw's plays, social purpose is predominant, but the satire and the wit bring the general tone of the works into line more with the manners style than with that of the serious problem drama. There is truly in *The Liars* a type of laughter which has been heard in the English theatre but rarely since the times of Goldsmith and Sheridan: not the loud outburst of merriment such as greets the farce or the ludicrous music-hall turn, but the mellowed laughter which results from sheer intellectual enjoyment. *The Liars,* too, besides having this essence of genuine comic wit, possesses a well-developed although peculiarly constructed plot, which preserves its clarity even in the midst of the complications consequent on the introduction of character after character as the play develops. Of the unsatirical comedy of manners in recent times Mr Jones is one of our greatest masters. The same or similar qualities are to be found in the talented work of Mr W. Somerset Maugham, who, starting his career in Germany with *Schiffbrüchig* (1902), has provided the theatre with a series of excellently constructed plays, most of them full of satire and abounding in pictures of modern social life. *A Man of Honour* (1903), *The Tenth Man* (1910), and many of the others contain scenes of sterling excellence, and *The Circle* (1921) is an almost perfect 'serious comedy.' The merit of this last-mentioned play lies in its excellently drawn characters and in the peculiarly delicate poise of its style. In spite of the fact that there is a problem underlying its wit, Mr Maugham here comes near to the spirit of earlier 'manners' comedy, and he shows an advance on Oscar Wilde in the subtle use he makes of the *mot de situation* where the dramatic setting adds to or gives point to the sally of wit. Mr Maugham's greatest success in recent days has been *Our Betters* (acted U.S.A. 1917; London 1923), a work which at once recalls Restoration comedy. The setting is aristocratic, the people introduced live idle lives, intrigue alone occupying their thoughts. The crudeness as well as the brilliance of the social portraiture calls for our attention. Unfortunately, Mr Maugham, who has such a decided *flair* for the theatre,

can stoop to provide works of a distinctly more trivial type. *East of Suez* (1922) won its popularity for purely meretricious elements infused into it.

More ambitious is Mr Alfred Sutro, who has striven to give a loftier tone to this comedy of social life. His failing probably arises from that endeavour. Frequently there is a discrepancy between the achievement and the aim. Mr Sutro's first play, *A Marriage has been Arranged,* was acted in 1902, and during the twenty-odd years of his dramatic career he has written some twenty-two plays. Among his literary and popular triumphs must be numbered *The Walls of Jericho* (1904), *The Fascinating Mr. Vanderveldt* (1906), and *The Choice* (1919). Mr Sutro's work is marked chiefly by his essentially natural dialogue. Without utilizing colloquialism and dialect he has succeeded in giving a lifelike effect to a dialogue which is truly brilliant. His characters, on the other hand, do not quite harmonize with this conversation. Frequently he descends as in the Angela and Oliver of *The Fascinating Mr Vanderveldt,* to stock figures, and even more frequently he permits his *dramatis personæ* to utter words which, had they been truly alive, they would never have uttered.

In this Mr Sutro forms a marked contrast to Hubert Henry Davies, who died a few years ago (1917). Davies' work dealt more with the fanciful and the psychological than with the depiction of manners and of wit. *Mrs Gorringe's Necklace* (1903), *Cousin Kate* (1903), and *The Mollusc* (1907) are all marked by these qualities. For subtle portraiture Davies was almost unrivalled in his time, *The Mollusc* in particular presenting a delicate study of a woman character, and his talent for infusing a romantic atmosphere into a realistic plot, without thereby descending into the morass of sentimentalism, was truly remarkable. This comedy is of particular interest because of its retention of the unity of place, although tendencies toward this retention can be traced in other modern dramatists alongside of contrary movements. In the modern drama we may have on the one hand the rapidly changing scene and the duration of generations in *Back to Methuselah,* while on the other we

are confronted with the unity of place in *The Mollusc* or the double unities in Mr Shaw's *Getting Married.*

In spite of the tendency toward wit and satire, to be seen clearly enough in the dramatic work of Mr A. A. Milne, and in that of Mr C. K. Munro, the latter of whom has won success with *At Mrs Beam's* (1921) and with *Storm, or the Battle of Tinderly Down* (1924), there is a decided movement toward fantasy in treatment and in theme among the modern dramatists. This tendency is to be traced even among the wittier dramatists of to-day. It appears in the artificiality and exaggeration of *At Mrs Beam's* no less than in Mr H. V. Esmond's *Eliza comes to Stay* (1912) and in Mr Arnold Bennett's *The Great Adventure* (1911). In the last-mentioned comedy a famous artist, Ilam Carve, allows himself to be thought dead. His valet, Albert Shawn, is buried with full honours in Westminster Abbey, and the artist settles down to a quiet Putney existence with Janet Cannot. The Bond-street picture-expert Ebag penetrates his disguise, and Westminster Abbey is trembling on the verge of a national disgrace. Relief comes through Lord Leonard Alcar, who patches up the differences between Carve and his cousin, and those between Ebag and the American collector Texel. The whole plot is delightfully impossible. We know, and Mr Bennett knows, that this could never have happened, yet the treatment is realistically satiric, somewhat in the Shavian style. An element of farce, it has been said, must enter into every true comedy, and farce in our own times is taking the form of topsy-turvy fancy.

This fantasy, allied with realism, appears often in the work of George Calderon, whose *The Fountain* (1909) deserves remembrance, and in that of Harold Chapin, author of *Augustus in Search of a Father* (1910), *The Marriage of Columbine* (1910), and *The Philosopher of Butterbiggins* (1915). Chapin's style is lighter than those we have been considering, but is marked by a delicate touch and true sympathy. Mr Allan Monkhouse adopts the same style in *Mary Broome* (1911), *The Education of Mr Surrage* (1912), and his one-act piece, *The Grand Cham's Diamond*

(1918). The last-mentioned playlet, employing to excellent effect the surroundings and dialect of a lower middle-class London suburb, throws into the midst of an ordinary setting a wave of romance, which takes shape as a great diamond stolen from the "Grand Cham." Mrs Perkins would keep it when it comes flying through their window, for in her commonplace breast she nourishes a craving for something beyond their narrow surroundings, but it is taken back by her daughter's *fiancé* Albert, who is a detective. Quietly they all settle down again, and the bird of romance is flown.

Miss Perkins. I don't know what Albert'll think of you.
Mrs Perkins. 'E's not going to marry me, thank 'eaven.
Mr Perkins. D'y' want t' know what I think of yer?
Mrs Perkins. Go on! Y've no 'magernation.
Miss Perkins. I never thought to be ashamed of my own mother.
Mr Perkins. Wantin' in the very el'ments of morality. I wonder 'ow Sossiety'd get on if they was all like you.
Mrs Perkins. Polly, put up that blind. It's a bit chilly with them broken panes.
Miss Perkins. Most unladylike as well.
[*They settle down into their chairs again. Mrs Perkins takes up her darning and Mr Perkins the paper. After putting up the blind Miss Perkins returns to her puzzle.*
Mrs Perkins. 'Ow much did y' say it was worth, Pa?
Mr Perkins [*gruffly*]. Never mind.
Mrs Perkins. Well, I 'ad my bit o' fun for onct.

CURTAIN

Here is no struggle of generations, youth against age; it is age itself which pines for romance.

Mr John Galsworthy in *Joy* (1907), a play in which a daughter cannot realize her mother's love-affairs until she falls in love herself, and in *The Little Man* (1915) captures something of the same style. *The Little Man* is "a farcical morality." The characters are individually portrayed, and there is realism to the extent of an Austrian railway buffet, a Continental train, and German *polizei,* but the whole atmosphere is one of fancy and impossibility. So too, with the work of Rudolph Besier. *Don* (1909) *and Lady Patricia* (1911) are delightful admixtures of these two

qualities. Virtuosity and topsy-turvy idealism are Mr Besier's chief fields, and few have succeeded in painting them so perfectly and with such subtle grace. Mr Granville Barker's charming *Prunella* (1904; written in collaboration with Mr Laurence Housman) captures the same atmosphere in its delightful lines and quaint setting.

In the same style are written Mr Louis Napoleon Parker's *Disraeli* (1911), *Pomander Walk* (1912), and *A Minuet* (1922), where an effort is made to secure, without an undue infusion of sentimentality, a similar impression of delicacy and of quaintness. Perhaps Mr Graham Moffat's *Bunty Pulls the Strings* (1911) and *A Scrape o' the Pen* (1912) may be mentioned alongside of these, and with them Mr Harold Brighouse's *Lonesome-like* (1911), *Spring in Bloomsbury* (1911), and *Followers* (1915), as well as Mr Eden Phillpotts' recently revived *The Farmer's Wife* (1916).

Wit, satire, display of social manners, therefore, all run parallel with another movement, which deals with fancy and things impossible. Mr George Bernard Shaw and Sir James Barrie stand at the head of these two movements, even if at times the two strains seem confused and for a moment Mr Shaw becomes Sir James Barrie and Sir James Barrie becomes Mr Shaw. It is probable that the comedy of the future will be distinguished mainly by this comparatively modern development of fantastic realism, where dialect and living characters keep us tied to the ordinary world and where imagination bears us to enchanted realms, to "things impossible and cast beyond the moon."

(iv) J. M. Synge and the Irish School

In this rapid survey of the comic endeavour of the last few years nothing has so far been said of the Irish comic theatre. Though the majority of the works produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, have been tragic or gloomy there have been sufficient comedies written for that theatre during the last thirty years to merit their independent treatment. Synge himself, who found tragic expression

for his thoughts in *Riders to the Sea* and in *Deirdre of the Sorrows,* cast his *In the Shadow of the Glen* as a comedy and wrote his greatest masterpiece, *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), in a laughing strain. The plot, perhaps, savours of impossibility, but for all that *The Playboy* is a realistic work, so realistic that it aroused a wild storm of indignation from the patriotic camp when it first appeared. The plot is a simple one, but delightfully absurd. At a small Irish village there arrives a callow youth, one Christy Mahon, who is thought to have killed his father. Away from the reality, all who hear his grandiloquent tale magnify him into a hero, and Pegeen Flaherty goes so far as to cast off her loutish *fiancé,* Shawn, in favour of this grand and picturesque figure. Christy's joy, however, is soon cut short by the arrival of his father, who chastises him soundly and leaves the inn. Pegeen finds her hero to be a man of very mortal clay, and her taunting words express her own disappointment and bitterness of heart. Her tirade fires Christy with a real glow of courage; he rushes outside and murderously attacks his father. The latter is left lying for dead, but the reality does not impress the village folk as did the reported deed, clothed in the soft light of distance. Instead of praising and admiring the unfortunate Christy, they seize and bind him, with intent to give him over to justice. But old Mahon is a sturdy peasant, and even his son's fury has not succeeded in knocking the life out of him. In he comes again, giving the superstitious and only half-sober inn-frequenters the idea that he is a ghost. When all have gone father unbinds son, and off they trudge good-humouredly from Flaherty's house. Shawn now thinks that Pegeen will return to him, but her mind has been filled with a vision. She has lost the only Playboy of the Western World, and Shawn is dismissed with a good sound cuff on the ear to pay him for his lack of spirit and for his impertinence.

The Playboy of the Western World is, unquestionably, the chief masterpiece in comedy with which the Irish theatre has so far provided us, but there are many other plays which come near to catching its broad humour and free

sense of fun. Even Mr Yeats, mystic and poet though he be, has written an excellent satiric comedy in *The Pot of Broth* (1902) and has infused into many of his more serious plays scenes of a humorous nature. The chief exponent of comedy in the Irish school is Lady I. A. Gregory. A few tragic pieces she has written, but her main tendencies are toward the comic, and her knowledge of Irish life and character has enabled her to write a series of delightfully entertaining and amusing plays. Like so many of the English dramatists she delights in the interweaving of fantasy and real life. Her *dramatis personæ* are drawn from actuality, but her plots frequently turn on some impossible and imaginative theme. So, too, she loves exaggeration, and employs that exaggeration with perfect surety to secure her effects. Her great strength, however, comes from her contact with the folk; in this her plays differ markedly from those of Mr Jones and Mr Milne. Just as Synge found inspiration in the maybe coarse but primitively strong and untouched qualities of the Irish peasantry, writing almost in a medievally blunt strain *The Tinker's Wedding* (1909), so Lady Gregory has gone to the people for her chief power. *Spreading the News* (1904), *Hyacinth Halvey* (1906), *The Workhouse Ward* (1908), and other of her plays depend entirely for their value on this close contact with the folk, and in thus showing how much of worth lies in the primitive emotions of a comparatively uncivilized community she and Synge have given an inestimable gift to our literature. Under Wilde and Sir Arthur Pinero the drama was rapidly becoming vitiated, because wholly intent upon an over-cultured and often morally degenerate society. The Irish writers, no less than the Russian writers, have displayed to us what artistic and morally healthy elements may be gained by a study of less sophisticated circles.

In one particular direction, too, Lady Gregory stands forward as an innovator. In his *Pompey the Great* (1910) Mr Masefield endeavoured to reinterpret the salient facts of a great historical epoch in the light of modern times. Somewhat satirically Mr Shaw has done the same in *The*

Man of Destiny (1897) and in *Cæsar and Cleopatra* (1899). Lady Gregory, writing of historical events in *The Canavans* (1906) and in *The White Cockade* (1905), has striven to show what excellent comedy can be achieved, without any satirical purpose, by a similar treatment of ancient times. To this type of drama Lady Gregory herself has given the title "Folk-history," and she has written enough to show that there are here infinite possibilities for modern dramatists who would return to the inspiration of the people. Virtually, we are back once more in that epoch which gave birth to the author of *George a Greene* and to those many writers of chronicle-history plays of whom Shakespeare is immeasurably the greatest.

There are certain signs that the Irish drama may witness in the future a marked development of this comic strain. It is certainly difficult to laugh when the heart is bleeding, and Cathleen Ni Houlihan has called only too many of her sons away from art and away from life to high emprise, and bitterness, and death. With the settlement of recent years, however, there is at least the possibility that a happier note may return, and maybe that happier note will echo the strains of Synge, of Lady Gregory, and of Mr Lennox Robinson.[1]

[1] For his *The Whiteheaded Boy* (1916) Mr. Robinson will be remembered as a master in Irish comedy. The recent successes of Mr. Sean O'Casey's somewhat bitter *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Shadow of a Gunman* seem to show that a revival of comedy is imminent at the Abbey Theatre. While these two plays are not by any means wholly comic the farcical scenes in them show that Mr. O'Casey has the power of writing what may be called the city comedy of Irish life, as distinguished from the comedy of the peasantry as presented by Synge. A good study of recent tendencies is given in Ernest Boyd's *Ireland's Literary Renaissance* (1923).

CHAPTER VII

THE OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

THIS general survey of the development of drama has left many writers, even writers of some talent, unmentioned, but an attempt has been made to trace the development of theatrical types and tendencies from their beginnings in the medieval period on to the present day. At the present moment we stand at a crisis. That great revival of the literary drama which was heralded in the late nineteenth century and which seemed to promise so much in 1914 was broken by the War, which drew men and women away from more serious art to the relaxation of lighter forms of amusement. Nothing has been said in the last chapter of what may be termed the unliterary drama, the drama which never gets printed, or if printed is intended primarily to capture the tastes of a less exacting public. It is only too true that this lesser drama has usurped to a large extent the position occupied by the greater works of the early years of the century. Revues of the most inane and often of the most indecent sort have followed one another in our larger theatres with monotonous regularity. Romantic musical comedies have run for years. A trivial and lifeless pierrotic show has captured and is still capturing popular attention. Drury Lane continues its series of more spectacular melodramatic excitements. *Chu Chin Chow* won a record in longevity. The music-halls are packed to overflowing. Assuredly, if we look at this side of the theatrical life of to-day we may well turn pessimists, but perhaps Sydney Grundy has a moral to offer us in his *Pair of Spectacles*. Instead of consistently bewailing the state of our playhouses as do many of our critics, we may assume the gold-rimmed glasses of Mr Benjamin Goldfinch and find many signs which call for hopefulness. Once more, after the turmoil and the

frenzy of Armageddon, our playwrights are turning to their old themes and their old ways, striving to regain something of that power which seemed to be lost between 1914 and 1920, and new dramatists are arising with fresh aims and reinspired enthusiasm. In many ways it is evident that circumstances are shaping themselves for an even greater dramatic impetus in the future. It has been noted that the Irish school has gained strength from its close association with the people. Perhaps learning a lesson from those Irish writers, several of our own dramatists have turned away from upper-class society, in a search for themes and characters less vitiated, while parallel with their efforts go those of a number of enthusiasts who are striving to revive the love of drama in the country districts. The strength of the Elizabethan theatre came from its association with the folk, and it may well be that the modern theatre will take its chief inspiration from the same source. The Drama League is endeavouring to co-ordinate these scattered efforts, and great authors such as the ever-to-be-revered Mr Thomas Hardy are taking an active interest in this new development. With this goes the rise of theatrical interest in the provincial towns. The Dublin, Glasgow, and Birmingham repertory theatres contributed largely to the revitalization of drama in the first decades of this century, and still they or their successors are doing good work. In our own times we have seen repertory more fully established in London than it has ever been before. The Everyman Theatre and the Regent Theatre are setting a standard which many must shortly follow. In spite of the long runs, therefore, there are healthier tendencies abroad, and we may look forward here, as in the provinces and in Ireland, to fresh manifestations of dramatic enthusiasm.

Another sign of hope lies in the attitude of the playwrights themselves. The theatre fundamentally is not merely a sounding-board for the author. It demands the genius of a producer, of an actor, of a scenic artist, of an electrician, to raise it to the height of perfection. Whereas many of the major writers of the nineteenth century gazed



DESIGN BY PAUL SHELVING FOR KAISER'S "GAS"

down with supercilious disdain upon the other workers in the playhouse, modern authors are coming to realize that they form only one part in a vast circle of composite artistry. Nowhere has this been so fully expressed as in a letter written recently by Mr Masefield to Mr Gordon Craig and published in the *Mask*.[1] Says Mr Masefield:

> I see that, in *The Mask*, you discuss the place of the poet in a theatre.
>
> In this country, poets have the supreme precedent of Shakespeare, who settled this point by calling some of the other artists, who worked in the theatre with him, "his fellows."
>
> A poet should be "the fellow" of the other artists working in the theatre. He and the other artists should be working together to give to each other the greatest possible opportunities for the exercise of their powers. Whenever this happens in any theatre something noble is achieved.
>
> No worker in the theatre can do without the art of his fellow-workers; each should bring all that he can to the common stock, which thereby becomes uncommon.

This might be taken as a text by all dramatists, and happily it is a symbol of a movement everywhere present to-day. While the playwright endeavours to produce powerful drama, his main thought is directed to the ennoblement of the theatre as a whole, and he realizes that to achieve such an ennoblement his efforts alone are by no means sufficient.

This question of the relationship of poet and producer (taking producer as a common term to express all the non-poetic arts of the playhouse) necessarily demands a note on the tendencies in the present-day theatrical world. In the nineteenth century the managers were content if they achieved showy results. They did not care whether their scenery was in harmony with the play so long as they drew a gasp of foolish astonishment from the gaping public. If they endeavoured to secure anything more it lay wholly in the building up of wood and canvas cathedrals, or castles, or palaces upon the stage. Their art, that is to say, was not artistic. They attempted to do merely what the poster-designer of a few years ago attempted, or what the many

[1] July 1924.

crude photographic painters attempted when they depicted for the delectation of tourists and in the most unimaginative colouring some typical scenes of London, or Paris, or Venice. Art, however, does not lie in show or in pure realism; it lies in the production of such a homogeneous unity that our spirits, as it were, are fused for a moment with the harmony of line and colour. We do not admire a picture of Botticelli's because the blue waves are like the sea, or because the timid Venus rising from her shell is like any woman who ever lived; nor do we admire it because it is spectacular. We stand in rapt attention only because the artist by some alchemy of genius has so blended his colours, has so interwoven line with line, that he has created a perfect unity, something to capture our spirits by what magic not even the most erudite of psychologists can explain to us.

This conception of high art in the theatre hardly came before the beginning of the twentieth century, although efforts had been made since at least 1890 toward a greater perfection of the scenic accompaniment to drama. To-day this conception is predominant. There are theatres which, for lack of money, are forced to make shift with worn canvases and battered properties, but the prevailing tone, even in revue, is to evolve something which shall mean more than mere splashes of paint on pieces of carpentry hastily nailed together. While this conception predominates, and happily predominates, there seem to be two main tendencies which draw it one way or the other. The first of these may be styled the realistic and the second the imaginative. They correspond to two conceptions of dramatic art as a whole. There are some who hold that in the playhouse we seek illusion. These critics say that what we desire in the theatre is to be carried away out of our ordinary lives, and to be cheated into believing that the scene on the stage is reality. It is undoubtedly true that some people do feel this. There are traditional tales concerning primitive cowboys or others who were prepared to take part in the action upon the stage, and even in London there are not many actors who would rather play a villain

than a hero. At the same time, illusion for the ordinary spectator is only partial at the best, and nearly all of us are aware, even in moments of highest tension or of most hilarious laughter, that the battlements are not of Elsinore and the trees are not of Arden forest. Those who plead for the greatest possible realism on the stage have this in their favour—never before has the theatre been so amply supplied with materials for the securing of a semblance of actuality. The scene-painter's art allied to that of the electrician can now obtain effects undreamt of before. Our drawing-rooms can look like drawing-rooms now, not like pieces of flimsy canvas; our woods can look like woods, and our seas like seas. Those, too, who have witnessed some recent productions in which the new German lighting effects were employed will agree that it would be hard to tell the fictional clouds that flit over the painted sky from real clouds, or the fictional sunrise from a real sunrise. The question is, however, not whether the semblance of actuality can be obtained, but whether it is precisely that which we desire. Would we not rather have the real drawing-room of Mrs So-and-So, the real Epping Forest, the real Atlantic, rather than these feigned copies of them? Would we not choose to watch those beautiful clouds from an open moorland rather than from our seats in gallery or in stalls? It is precisely the same problem which arises in the consideration of drama itself. We do not want merely an excerpt from reality; it is the imaginative transformation of reality, as it is seen through the eyes of the poet, that we desire.

It would seem, therefore, that the more truly fundamental purpose of modern theatrical production will be directed rather to the world of imaginative fantasy than to that of realism or naturalism, call it what we will. The great art of the theatre is to suggest, not to tell openly; to dilate the mind by symbols, not by actual things; to express in Lear a world's sorrow, and in Hamlet the grief of humanity. Many of our modern producers are striving in this direction, although it must be confessed that England here is well in the background. The only true genius who has arisen amongst us has to spend his life in Italy, after

having endeavoured vainly to obtain a theatre in which to realize his aims. There can be no question but that Mr Gordon Craig could, if opportunities were given to him, establish in London such a theatre that the whole of artistic Europe would flock to see it. Mr Craig has the breadth of view, the enthusiasm, the vast conception, which is necessary for the achievement of the highest artistic expression. He has to a high degree what he finds to be lacking in our lives—"belief and the power to worship." For him "Art is not a pick-me-up; it is a communion. The theatre is not a bar; it is a famous temple." Mr Gordon Craig's designs are essentially imaginative and symbolic, with great vastnesses and deep shadows and the dazzling rays of the sun. He would lift the theatre above the plane of actuality to that of a universal vision.

This reaction to naturalism is to be seen markedly in some other less majestic attempts to secure freedom of artistic expression. The Russian theatre has, in the last few years, turned almost completely 'futurist' in the sense that every endeavour is made to escape from the actual and tangible form of the physical world and to create a new world of unknown things. These new developments so far have not reached London save in a very tentative and experimental way, but on the Continent they are well known, mainly through the activities of the Fourth Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre, formerly directed by the late M. Vachtangov. It is impossible to say what new effects are procurable by these new methods when applied to older plays, but certainly they bring an air of freshness and novel beauty to fanciful entertainments such as *Princess Turandot*. Vachtangov's scenery for this is purely fanciful, with twisted columns and cubes and squares, with slanting balconies and doors truncated. This scenery, however, perfectly expresses the fanciful nature of the play, the Eastern imagery and the comic figures borrowed from the *commedia dell'arte* tradition. We are informed that even these new developments are out of date in the theatres of Moscow and that still more daring attempts are being made in the direction of freeing



Scene in Meierhold's Theatre, Moscow

theatrical art from the rigid conventionalism which so far has distinguished it.[1]

Assuredly these new movements are good, but there is the danger that in this introduction of 'futurism' the theatre may be made the happy hunting-ground of charlatans, and that the majesty and splendour of the drama may be lost. Moreover, the employment of such devices in plays written for other conditions seems inevitably doomed to failure. For the fantastic they are excellent; for the majestic they are absurd. The modern age is one of continual striving against convention, a continual seeking for the new, a continual beating against the pettiness of the sentimentally pretty; and here in the scenic art of the theatre we may find that which expresses these desires. Here, if anywhere, is the higher life, the overthrow of pure naturalism.

To these movements in scenic art correspond a number of developments in the dramatic work of our present years. It is hazardous to prognosticate concerning the future development of an art, but there seem to be certain main movements in our own time which well may form the chief contributions of our age to the international art of the theatre. In the eighteen-nineties, as we have seen, realism predominated. This was necessary, in order to destroy the false romantic sentiment of the preceding decades, but soon it was found that realism was not enough. Then came, in serious drama, the union of a story of actual life with something outside the ordinary world. So we have the many realistically poetic tragedies produced in Dublin, we have Mr Masefield's *The Tragedy of Nan,* we have the numerous post-War plays which strive to infuse the phenomena of life with a force which is, in the literal sense of the word, supernatural. This type of drama will, in all

[1] Typical of recent developments in the realm of the drama corresponding with these new methods of stage presentation are the plays of Evreinov, where symbolism is carried to an extreme. A translated extract has been given on pp. 401–3. It is probable that there will be witnessed a considerable interest in this most modern type of drama in the course of the following years. Already the Russian influence has been felt in Germany and in Italy.

probability, form the chief development of tragedy in the succeeding years.

A similar movement is visible in the sphere of comedy. The pure comedy of manners, painfully realistic, seems to be giving place to a fantastic comedy which does not forget nature, but which delights at the same time in impossibilities and in wildly fanciful flights into the world of the imagination. Once more reality forms the basis and prevents an escape into an intangible and possibly meaningless world, while fantasy aids in securing a higher appeal and a more universal tone.

In addition to these there is a type of dramatic effort which is tragic, yet cannot be called tragedy. It is the drama of fear, and once more mingles fantasy with actuality. These plays of fear usually combine some element of mystery with a plot essentially realistic in character. Detective themes are often introduced to give interest to the development of the particular plays. The drama of fear undeniably calls forth weaker emotions in an audience than does high tragedy, but it is nevertheless a perfectly legitimate form of drama and will probably find a marked development in later years. Even now plays of this type are proving more and more popular.

An imaginative treatment of real life seems, therefore, to be the keynote to modern dramatic productivity, and it forms what appears to be the best compromise between the crudely realistic efforts of previous years and the more rebellious efforts of some present-day extremists. It is just possible that these extreme elements may gain a hold over certain schools of dramatic activity. There are signs, for example, that Marinetti, directly or indirectly, is influencing the theatre. Marinetti is a pronounced modernist, and he sees in the newly developed art of the cinema many possibilities for the awakening of a new spirit in the theatre. He would have none of your acts or long scenes, but woulld split up each play into a number of short episodes, each terse and to the point, a succession of short pictures such as we find in the film. This style of dramatic writing, we are informed, has captured many of the modern

Russian authors. One does not deny that it may occasionally produce a fine work of art, but as a general principle of composition it seems open to much criticism. The theatre has admittedly found since 1912 a powerful rival in the picture-house. The art of film-making is a high one. There is an art in the weaving of *scenarii,* of film-acting, of film-producing, of film-taking. To all this we may agree; but it is not by any means so certain that the theatre ought suddenly to desert its former ways and career after the new fashion. The truth is that the film has an art of its own, distinct from the art of the theatre, and any attempt to make the one comply with the terms of the other is doomed to failure.

Marinetti's theories, therefore, will in all probability exercise little permanent influence upon the general development of the drama. The drama has a long lineage; its strength lies in the past as well as in the future. It were absurd now to attempt imitations of Shakespeare or of Molière, because Shakespeare and Molière wrote of and for the seventeenth century, yet Shakespeare and Molière through their fundamental greatness still form founts of inspiration for our modern authors. The theatre, if it will be true to itself, must at one and the same time look back to a treasured past and look forward to the development of new motives and of new themes in harmony with the spirit of fresh generations. The theatre, the great theatre, the theatre which will live for all time, is at once the most traditional and the most progressive of all the arts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. NOTES ON CRITICAL WORKS

THE following list of books on English drama is necessarily selective. It is intended merely as a preliminary guide for students who may wish to devote special attention to one particular period, and must be supplemented by reference to more exhaustive bibliographies contained in some of the larger works cited below. For those who may desire to work on the dramatic literature of other countries the information given in the subject catalogues of the British Museum will be found useful.

(i) Dictionaries

There is no exhaustive reference-book for English drama, although one such is now in active preparation. Up to 1812 the *Biographia Dramatica* of Isaac Reed and Stephen Jones is incomparably the best. Additional details may be gained from various earlier dramatic dictionaries, such as those of Langbaine, Jacob, and Whincop. Research students should also note the annotated copies of Langbaine in the British Museum, as well as the separate manuscript collections there. More recently were published *The 'Stage' Encyclopædia,* brief but comprehensive, and the more ambitious *Dictionary of the Drama* by W. Davenport Adams, which, unfortunately, was left incomplete at the letter G. For the Elizabethan theatre F. G. Fleay's *Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama* (1891) and *A Chronicle History of the London Stage* (1890) are valuable and suggestive, although now out of date. Bibliographical information is provided in his lists of plays and masques (1900 and 1902) by W. W. Greg, who is at present engaged on a more exhaustive survey of the printed works of the period. For the later drama lists of playwrights and of plays are given as appendices to the present writer's *History of Restoration Drama* (1923) and *History of Early Eighteenth-Century Drama* (1925). These lists will be continued in succeeding volumes for the periods 1750–1800, 1800–50, and 1850–1900. At present there is not even an incomplete hand-list for these years,

although J. Genest, in his *History of the Drama and Stage in England*, carries his chronological survey of performances up to 1830. Of modern works Thomas H. Dickinson (in *The Contemporary Drama of England*, 1917), A. E. Morgan (in *Tendencies of Modern English Drama*, 1923), and Barrett H. Clark (in *A Study of the Modern Drama*, 1925) give selected dictionaries. The last-mentioned work is most complete from this point of view, but its worth is lessened by the fact that the dates given are often only of American publication or performance. A good survey of English theatrical literature, especially that of the eighteenth century, is provided in W. J. Lowe's *English Theatrical Literature* (1887).

(ii) General Histories

General histories of the drama are few in number. *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (referred to hereafter as *C.H.E.L.*) devotes two volumes (v and vi) to the medieval and Elizabethan stage, and has separate chapters in other volumes on dramatic development up to the end of the nineteenth century. Most of these chapters are short, and are marred by the fact that the dramatic works of men more famous as poets or novelists are abstracted from the chapters which deal with the theatre. The bibliographies, however, should be noted. F. E. Schelling has a work on *English Drama* (1914) containing a vast amount of information, but somewhat overstressing the Elizabethan period, and there is the *Short History of the English Drama* by Benjamin Brawley (1922), a useful general guide, as well as R. Farquharson Sharp's *A Short History of the English Stage* (1909).

(iii) Medieval

On medieval drama the standard authority is Sir E. K. Chambers' *The Mediæval Stage* (1903), and most histories of Elizabethan theatrical endeavour have sections on the miracles and moralities. Most important are the *History of English Dramatic Literature* (1899) by Sir A. W. Ward, wherein the development of the drama is carried as far as 1714, F. E. Schelling's *Elizabethan Drama* (1908), a work of scholarship and fine criticism, W. Creizenach's *Geschichte des neueren Dramas* (1893–1909), W. J. Courthope's *History of English Poetry* (1895–1903), C. M. Gayley's *Plays of Our Forefathers* (1909), and J. J. Jusserand's *Literary History of the English People* (1907–9). A. W. Pollard has

an illuminating preface to his *English Miracle Plays* (latest edn. 1923), and there is interesting critical matter in J. M. Manly's *Specimens of Pre-Shakespearean Drama* (1900–3). There are many reprints of medieval plays. Besides the texts in the last-mentioned volumes, the *Ludus Coventriæ* has been edited by J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps (Shakespeare Society, 1841), and by Miss K. S. Block (Early English Text Society, 1922), and the two Coventry cycle plays appear in the E.E.T.S. publications, edited by H. Craig. The York plays have been reprinted by Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith (1885) and the Towneley mysteries by A. W. Pollard (E.E.T.S., 1897). Other miracle plays have been included in the E.E.T.S. series, still others in *Anglia* (vols. vii, xxi, xxx) and *Englische Studien* (vol. xxvi). The moralities, also, have been fairly fully edited. Specimens may be found in the volumes of the Malone Society, the E.E.T.S., and in the "Tudor Facsimile Texts" series edited by J. S. Farmer. Most of these are accompanied by critical matter.

(iv) Elizabethan

Texts of Elizabethan plays are numerous. Gifford, Dyce, Bullen, and others have edited the works of many individual authors, and Farmer's facsimile reprints as well as the Malone Society type facsimiles provide accurate reproductions of the originals. There are, besides, many modernized reprints, *e. g.*, the "Mermaid" series and the specimens of pre-Shakespearean drama in the "Everyman's Library." It can never be too often insisted upon that these reprints are fundamentally useless to the serious student. The only useful reprints possible are the accurate line-for-line facsimiles, such as the Malone Society provides. The "Cambridge Classics" series (including Beaumont and Fletcher) is good, as are the Kyd, Greene, and Lyly, published by the Oxford Press. For several selected plays the "Belles Lettres" series provides adequate texts with full and illuminating introductions. Fuller details may be obtained from the appendix to volumes v and vi of the *C.H.E.L.*

The critical work on the Elizabethan dramatic literature is vast. Above, under (iii), have been indicated the principal books, but no serious study of this period can be attempted without a detailed investigation into particular problems. The very full list of books in Sir E. K. Chambers' monumental *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923) will give many suggestions for specialized reading. Among the general surveys, apart from those noted above, we

may mention C. F. Tucker Brooke's *Tudor Drama* (1911), J. A. Symonds' *Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama* (1900), F. S. Boas' *Shakspere and his Predecessors* (1895), A. J. F. Mézières' *Prédécesseurs et contemporains de Shakespeare* (3rd edn. 1881), and Janet Spens' *Elizabethan Drama* (1922). Valuable comment is provided in J. J. Jusserand's *Le Théâtre en Angleterre jusqu'aux prédécesseurs immédiats de Shakespeare* (3rd edn. 1881), and there is a mass of information in J. P. Collier's *History of English Dramatic Poetry* (1879). This last work must, however, be used with care, as Collier was an incorrigible forger, and many of the documents cited in his work existed nowhere but in his own mind. J. L. Klein's *Geschichte des Dramas* (1886) contains some valuable matter, as does R. Prölss' *Geschichte des neueren Dramas* (1883). Taine's *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1864; translated 1872) contains no matter of research, but interesting critical judgments are numerous.

(v) Shakesperian

The Shakespeare literature is vast, and only one or two works can be mentioned here. The Life is best told by Sir Sidney Lee (latest edn. 1925). This collects all the available data, and will probably never be superseded, although J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps' *Illustrations of the Life of Shakespeare* (1874) contains interesting documentary matter. Most of the other "Lives," such as that by Sir Walter Raleigh, are valuable for criticism, not for fact. Sir Sidney Lee's book contains notices of many works on Shakespeare; these notices may be supplemented by reference to Jaggard's large bibliography of Shakespeariana. Critical studies, of very varying value, abound. Several important eighteenth-century essays have been collected together by D. Nichol Smith (1903), and E. Walder has a study on *Shakespearean Criticism, Textual and Literary, from Dryden to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (1895). If reference is required direct to the original texts a start might be made with Thomas Rymer's *A Short View of Tragedy* (1693), Dryden's *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* (1668), Farmer's *An Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare* (1767), and Morgann's *Essay on Sir John Falstaff* (1777). The prefaces of the various editors—Rowe, Pope, Theobald, and Johnson especially—should likewise be noticed. Earlier criticism will be found in *The Shakespeare Allusion Book* (1909). Of romantic critical work that of S. T. Coleridge in *Notes and Lectures on Shakespeare* (1849), of W. Hazlitt in *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* (1817), and of

A. C. Swinburne in *A Study of Shakespeare* (1880) are probably the most important. Recent criticism, however, has largely supplanted the old. A. C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) proved epoch-making, as did E. Dowden's *Shakespere: His Mind and Art* (1874) and G. P. Baker's *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist* (1907). Among other works might be mentioned Sir Walter Raleigh's *Shakespeare* (1907), R. G. Moulton's *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (1885), T. R. Lounsbury's *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (1901; giving an excellent survey of some eighteenth-century editors), J. C. Collins' *Studies in Shakespeare* (1904), G. Brandes' *William Shakespeare* (1896), and J. Brander Matthews' *Shakespeare as a Playwright* (1913).

Several particular problems require more detailed investigation. The question of bibliography is one that to-day has assumed special importance owing to the researches of A. W. Pollard, W. W. Greg, and others. No better start could be made on this than a careful reading of the former's *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos* (1909) and *Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates* (1920). Reference should be made also to the latter's articles "On Certain False Dates in Shakespearean Quartos" (*The Library*, 1908 and 1910). H. R. Plomer, in the same journal for 1906, has an essay on "The Printers of Shakespeare's Plays and Poems," and R. Crompton Rhodes has written a book on *The First Folio* (1923), which contains a good survey of the various difficulties. Additional matter is provided in some of the essays contributed to the series of Tercentenary First Folio Lectures published in 1924 by the Oxford University Press.

A true investigation of the various problems connected with this can be undertaken only when reference is made direct to the original Shakespearian texts. The First Folio has been several times reprinted. The best of these reproductions is that edited by Sir Sidney Lee (1902), but the Methuen facsimile (1902) is less costly and provides a suitable working text. The reduced reprint (1876) of J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps is too small for convenient usage. The later folios are all represented in the Methuen series. The quarto texts are nearly all available in reprints. Forty-eight were issued under the editorship of Halliwell-Phillipps between 1862 and 1871; forty-three were later printed under the direction of F. J. Furnivall between 1880 and 1889. Several other diverse texts have been variously edited. For the majority of these plays the Furness *Variorum* edition, a truly monumental work, will be found invaluable. While it does not obviate the

necessity of referring to the originals it provides in its textual readings no less than in its massive notes material which no student of Shakespeare can ever lay aside.

The problems of Shakespeare's text, which, it may be noted, have taken a fresh colouring since the recent investigations into the play of *Sir Thomas More* (see the essay by Sir E. Maunde Thompson and *Shakespeare's Hand in "Sir Thomas More"* (1923)), may be related to the discussions concerning the authorship of the plays. Here J. M. Robertson's books are invaluable; special attention should be devoted to his *The Shakespeare Canon* (1922–25). Other essays by A. E. Morgan (on *Henry V*), by Dugdale Sykes (on *The Taming of the Shrew*), and by J. Parrott (on *Timon*) might be compared with this work. An attack on J. M. Robertson's theories appears in a lecture on *The Disintegration of Shakespeare* by Sir E. K. Chambers (1924).

This question of the authorship of the plays necessitates a study of the "Shakespeare Apocrypha" and of Shakespeare's sources. On the former reference should be made to A. F. Hopkinson's *Essays on Shakespeare's Doubtful Plays* (1900). The texts are all given in C. F. Tucker Brooke's *The Shakespeare Apocrypha* (1908), and some of them have been facsimiled. J. P. Collier edited a number of the source-books in *Shakespeare's Library* (re-edited by Hazlitt, 1875) The series of "Shakespeare Classics," under the general editorship of Sir Israel Gollancz, also presents many of the original texts in a modernized form.

The history of Shakespeare's plays on the English stage has been excellently told by G. C. D. Odell in his *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving* (1922), and there are many works dealing with his influence upon the Continent. A good, though brief, survey of these is given in Sir Sidney Lee's *Life*.

The study of the Shakespearian theatres is an important one. The most exhaustive account is in Sir E. K. Chambers' *The Elizabethan Stage*, but for a full discussion of the various theories reference may be made as well to other earlier works. Of these most important are W. J. Lawrence's *The Elizabethan Playhouse and Other Studies* (two series, 1912 and 1913), J. Q. Adams' Shakespearean Playhouses (1917), and A. H. Thorndike's *Shakespear's Theatre* (1916), as well as the various articles by G. F. Reynolds and T. A. Graves. A. Feuillerat's *Documents relating to the Office of the Revels at Court in the Time of King Edward VI and Queen Mary* (1914), *Documents relating to the Office of the Revels in the Time of Queen Elizabeth* (1908), and *Le bureau des*

menus-plaisirs et la mise en scène à la cour d'Elizabeth (1910), Tucker Murray's *Elizabethan Dramatic Companies* (1910), and J. Q. Adams' *The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert* (1918) reproduce important documents bearing upon stage history. A useful general outline of the subject is given by H. H. Child in the *C.H.E.L.* (vol. vi), and much information is given on this and kindred subjects in *Shakespeare's England* (1917). A reference to Sir E. K. Chambers' volume will indicate the numerous other books and articles on these and kindred subjects.

(vi) Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century

Besides the general studies mentioned above there are many works on particular writers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. On the early tragic writers J. W. Cunliffe's *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy* (1907), as well as the introduction to the works of Sir William Alexander (1922), edited by L. E. Kastner and H. B. Charlton, should be consulted. F. E. Schelling has an interesting study on George Gascoigne (1893), and this might be supplemented by J. W. Cunliffe's "The Influence of Italian on Elizabethan Drama" (*Modern Philology*, 1907). Heywood's work has been recently investigated in detail by A. W. Reed (see text), and there are numerous articles on the various early moralities and interludes.

So far, the best work on Marlowe is that by J. H. Ingram (1904), but much new material has been gathered by C. J. Tucker Brooke and contributed to *Modern Philology* and other journals. Recently discovered documents are printed by J. L. Hotson (1925). Robert Greene's works have been edited with a full introduction by J. C. Collins, Lyly's by R. W. Bond. The latest collected edition of Peele's writings is that edited by A. H. Bullen, but it is somewhat unsatisfactory. The same is true of Sir E. Gosse's reprint of Lodge's works (1878–82). Nashe, on the other hand, has found an excellent editor in R. B. McKerrow (1904–8) and Kyd in F. S. Boas (1901). All these works mentioned contain valuable introductory and explanatory matter.

New material has recently been gathered concerning Anthony Munday by Miss St Clair Byrne (see *The Library*), and some of his plays are represented in the Malone Society texts. The Jonson literature is large. At present no good edition of his works is available, but C. H. Herford and P. Simpson are preparing a fresh text, and Yale University is slowly building up its *Variorum*

edition. A new volume in the "English Men of Letters" series (by G. Gregory Smith) gives an excellent summary of his life and dramatic activities. A fairly full list of articles and critical studies is given in the *C.H.E.L.*, vol. vi. Particular notice should be taken of Castelain's *Ben Jonson* (1907). In 1922 was published a *Jonson Allusion Book*, edited by J. Q. Adams and J. F. Bradley, giving critical matter concerning Jonson's works up to the end of the seventeenth century. Mina Kerr's *Influence of Ben Jonson on English Comedy* (1912) contains some useful material. The only complete Dekker is that issued in Pearson's reprints (1873), but it gives a poor text. E. E. Stoll has an essay on "Jonson's Influence on Dekker" (*Modern Language Notes*, vol. xxi), and Swinburne another on his general work (*Nineteenth Century*, 1887). A good critical edition of his many plays is much to be desired. Chapman has found a modern critic in T. M. Parrott, whose *Comedies of Chapman* (1910–14) and selections in the "Belles Lettres" series (1907) have become standard. On his relationship to Shakespeare, A. Acheson has an illuminating, but somewhat exaggerated, study entitled *Shakespeare and the Rival Poet* (1903). Middleton's works have been edited by A. H. Bullen (1885–86); this is the best, but not a perfectly satisfactory edition. There are many articles on the subject of the Middleton-Rowley collaboration. No good edition of Massinger exists, but there is an excellent critical study by A. Cruickshank (1920), which summarizes much of the discussion concerning the Massinger-Fletcher problem. The best editions of Beaumont and Fletcher's works are those edited by A. H. Bullen (1904, incomplete) and by A. L. Waller and A. Glover (1905) respectively. Boyle, Bullen, Heay, Dugdale Sykes, and others have written much on the question of the authorship of these dramas. A. H. Thorndike's *Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher upon Shakespeare* (1901) is an important study.

Marston's works have been collected and edited both by Bullen (1887) and by A. B. Grosart (1879). *Antonio and Mellida* is included in the Malone Society reprints. There is no adequate study of his life and work, although detailed research has thrown light on certain aspects of his career (see J. H. Penniman's *The War of the Theatres*, 1897, and the various articles and studies on the "Poetomachia"). Tourneur's plays have been edited by J. C. Collins (1873) and Webster's works by Hazlitt (1857). There are many essays on problems connected with particular plays by these two men; a fairly full list up to the date of its publication

will be found in the *C.H.E.L.*, vol vi. Rupert Brooke's *John Webster and the Elizabethan Drama* (1916) is an interesting later study. W. Bang has edited part of Ford's dramatic works (1908), but there is no authoritative collected edition, nor is there an exhaustive study of his career. A good study of Shirley has recently been prepared by Arthur H. Nason (1915), but Gifford and Dyce's somewhat out-of-date edition of the works (1833) is the only one at present available. On the minor writers H. Swartz's essay on Suckling and E. K. R. Faust's *Richard Brome* (1887) will be found useful. A new edition of Heywood is greatly to be desired, as is a full study of his life and work. The University drama has been adequately treated by F. S. Boas (*University Drama in the Tudor Age*, 1914) and by G. C. Moore Smith (particularly his *College Plays*, 1923).

The standard work on the masque is that of A. Reyher (*Les masques anglais*, 1909). Reference might also be made to R. Brotanek's volume on the same subject (1902). A bibliographical list of printed masques is given by W. W. Greg. Notice should be taken also of J. Nichols' *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth* (1823) and *Progresses of King James* (1828). These contain many valuable texts, but the information in them has been largely used by later scholars. An interesting volume on Inigo Jones' masque designs has been issued by the Walpole and Malone Societies (1924). On the Elizabethan pastoral see W. W. Greg's *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama* (1906), and for the later development of this type Jeanette Marks' *English Pastoral Drama* (1914).

(vii) Restoration

The drama of the later seventeenth century has been dealt with in the present writer's *History of Restoration Drama* (1923). G. H. Nettleton carries his survey farther in point of date in *English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century* (1914). The English heroic play is the subject of a study by L. N. Chase, and the comedy of manners of another by C. Palmer (1910). Recently H. E. Rollins has contributed to various periodicals (cf. *Studies in Philology*, 1921) valuable notes on drama in the Commonwealth period. A rare and entertaining contemporary work is John Downe's *Roscius Anglicanus* (1708). This, and Pepys' *Diary*, furnish a good deal of our information concerning the theatre at this time. Lily Campbell's *Scenes and Machines* in the *Renaissance* (1923), E. Thaler's *Shakespeare to Sheridan* (1922),

W. J. Lowe's *Betterton* (1898), and J. W. Tupper's edition of two of D'Avenant's plays ("Belles Lettres" series, 1909) will be found useful. Beljame's *Le public et les hommes de lettres au dix-huitième siècle* (1898) is an important work, as are C. Perromat's study of Wycherley (1922), Bonamy Dobree's *Restoration Comedy* (1924), and J. W. Krutch's *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration* (1924). D. H. Miles essays to survey *The Influence of Molière on Restoration Comedy* (1910). This might be read along with J. E. Gillet's *Molière en Angleterre* (1913). R. S. Forsythe's *A Study of the Plays of Thomas D'Urfey* (1916–17) contains some interesting material, and there are many important works on the career and literary activities of Dryden. Congreve and Wycherley have recently been edited by Montague Summers (1923 and 1924), with lengthy introductions. Most of the other important authors of the period have had their works reprinted, but not always in a satisfactory form. Maidment and Logan's *Dramatists of the Restoration* is a useful series, but the text of the plays is unsatisfactory. A recent volume edited by D. H. Stevens, *Types of English Drama* (1923), includes a number of Restoration plays. Montague Summers' *Restoration Comedies* (1921) and *Shakespeare Adaptations* (1922) should also be consulted.

(viii) Eighteenth Century

The standard authority for the history of drama from 1660 to 1830 is that of Genest, but his work is little more than a series of excerpts from newspapers and bills, by no means complete. The development of drama during the period 1700–50 has been traced in the present writer's *History of Early Eighteenth-Century Drama* (1925). E. Bernbaum has an excellent study on *The Drama of Sensibility* (1915), and the careers of many of the major writers have been narrated in various works. Of these G. Aitken's *Steele* (1889), W. L. Cross' *The History of Henry Fielding* (1910), and A. E. Gipson's *John Home* (1917) are important. There is, besides, a large literature on Goldsmith and Sheridan. Some of the more valuable dramatic works of this period have been reprinted, and original editions are not so scarce as are those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. D. F. Canfield's *Corneille and Racine in England* (1904) is important. For the domestic drama reference should be made to A. Eloesser's *Das bürgerliche Drama* (1898) and Sir A. W. Ward's edition of *The London Merchant* ("Belles Lettres" series, 1906). F. Gaiffe's

Le drame en France au dix-huitième siècle (1910) gives a clear account of the development of sentimental plays on the Parisian stage.

(ix) Modern

There is no authoritative work on early nineteenth-century drama. This period can be approached only through an examination of contemporary treatises, a fairly full list of which is given by W. J. Lowe. Much information, of course, can be gained from the standard lives of the principal poetic dramatists of the time. On the theatre of the later nineteenth century and of our present day, on the other hand, there are many important works. A. E. Morgan has recently published a valuable volume on *Tendencies of Modern English Drama* (1923). Suggestive studies are William Archer's *English Dramatists of To-day* (1882) and *The Old Drama and the New* (1923), T. H. Dickinson's *The Contemporary Drama of England* (1917), F. W. Chandler's *Aspects of Modern Drama* (1914), Barrett H. Clark's *A Study of Modern Drama* (1925), Ashley Dukes' *Modern Dramatists* (1912) and *The Youngest Drama* (1922), A. Filon's *The English Stage* (1897), A. Henderson's *The Changing Drama* (1914), M. A. Franc's *Ibsen in England* (1919), C. Andrews' *The Drama To-day* (1913), W. L. Phelps' *Essays on Modern Dramatists* (1921), C. W. Scott's *The Drama of Yesterday and To-day* (1899), Watson Nicholson's *The Struggle for a Free Stage in London* (1906), J. Palmer's *The Censor and the Theatres* (1912), and F. Vernon's *The Twentieth-Century Theatre* (1924). A comparatively full list of other works dealing with various aspects of modern drama will be found in Barrett H. Clark's work cited above.

The student should also relate his reading of plays to the larger theories of dramatic art in general. Barrett H. Clark gives a full list of modern works on this subject in his *Study of the Modern Drama* and surveys past endeavour in *European Theories of the Drama*. A selected bibliography is given as an appendix to the present writer's *An Introduction to Dramatic Theory* (1923). Particular note should be taken also of the new ideals in stagecraft. Gordon Craig's works are of great value, and such books as Kenneth MacGowan's *Continental Stagecraft* (1922) should be read in close connexion with the main tendencies in modern drama.

II. SELECTED LIST OF PLAYS BY MINOR WRITERS

The following list is not intended to be in any way exhaustive. It includes merely the titles of some dramatic works which rise above mediocrity, and of a few modern plays not mentioned in the text. The student of the theatre should note that many of these plays are of prime importance for an understanding of the audiences of the various periods and for an appreciation of dramatic development. Accounts of such plays as appeared before 1750 will be found in Schelling's *Elizabethan Drama* and in the present writer's histories of Restoration and early eighteenth-century drama. For those published between 1750 and 1830 Genest should be consulted.

(i) To 1642

ALEXANDER, WILLIAM, EARL OF STIRLING. Important for the study of Senecan influence in England. The best edition is that prepared by L. E. Kastner and H. B. Charlton (1922).

ARMIN, ROBERT: *The History of the Two Maids of More-Clacke* (1609).

BARNES, BARNABE: *The Divil's Charter* (1607).

BARREY, LODOWICK: *Ram-Alley; Or Merrie-Tricks* (1611).

CAVENDISH, WILLIAM, DUKE OF NEWCASTLE. Important for his development of comedy. *The Country Captaine* (1649), *The Variety* (1649), *The Humorous Lovers* (1677), *The Triumphant Widow* (1677).

COWLEY, ABRAHAM: *The Guardian* (1650).

DABORNE, ROBERT: *The Poor-man's Comfort* (1655).

DENHAM, SIR JOHN: *The Sophy* (1642).

FIELD, NATHANIEL: *A Woman is a Weather-cocke* (1612), *Amends for Ladies* (1618).

GOFFE, THOMAS: *The Raging Turke* (1631), *The Careles Shepherdess* (1656).

HAUGHTON, WILLIAM: *English-Men for my Money* (1616).

KILLIGREW, THOMAS: *Comedies and Tragedies* (1664).

LOWER, SIR WILLIAM. Important for his translations from Quinault and Corneille.

MARKHAM, GERVAS: *The Dumbe Knight* (1608).

MARMION, SHAKERLEY: *Hollands Leaguer* (1632), *The Antiquary* (1641).

MAY, THOMAS: *The Heire* (1633).

NABBES, THOMAS: *The Bride* (1640).

QUARLES, FRANCIS: *The Virgin Widow* (1649).

SHARPHAM, EDWARD: *Cupid's Whirligig* (1607).

TAILOR, ROBERT: *The Hogge hath lost his Pearle* (1614).

TATHAM, JOHN. Various plays, both before and after 1642.

TOMKIE, THOMAS: *Albumazar* (1615).

ANONYMOUS: *The Weakest goeth to the Wall* (1600), *The Returne from Pernassus* (1606), *Wily Beguilde* (1606), *The Merry Devill of Edmonton* (1608), *Histrio-Mastix* (1610), *The London Chaunticleres* (1659).

(ii) 1660–1700

ARROWSMITH, ——: *The Reformation* (1673).

BANCROFT, JOHN: *King Edward the Third* (1691), *Henry the Second* (1693).

BETTERTON, THOMAS: *The Amorous Widow* (acted 1670; printed 1706), *The Revenge* (1680).

CARLISLE, JAMES: *The Fortune Hunters* (1689).

COTTON, CHARLES: *Horace* (1671).

D'AVENANT, DR CHARLES: *Circe* (1677).

DILKE, THOMAS: *The City Lady* (1697).

DOGGETT, THOMAS: *The Country-Wake* (1696).

DUFFETT, THOMAS: *The Empress of Morocco* (1674), *The Mock-Tempest* (1675).

FANE, SIR FRANCIS: *Love in the Dark* (1675).

GILDON, CHARLES: *The Roman Bride's Revenge* (1697), *Love's Victim* (1701).

GRANVILLE, GEORGE, LORD LANSDOWNE: *The She-Gallants* (1696), *Heroick Love* (1698), *The Jew of Venice* (1701), *The British Enchanters* (1706).

HIGDEN, HENRY: *The Wary Widdow* (1693).

HOPKINS, CHARLES: *The Neglected Virtue* (1696).

HOWARD, JAMES: *The English Mounsieur* (1674; acted 1666).

JEVON, THOMAS: *The Devil of a Wife* (1686).

LEANERD, JOHN: *The Country Innocence* (1677), *The Counterfeits* (1679).

MANLEY, MRS: *The Lost Lover* (1696), *Almyna* (1707).

MOTTEUX, PETER ANTHONY: *Love's a Jest* (1696), *The Novelty* (1697).

MOUNTFORT, WILLIAM: *The Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (*c.* 1686; printed 1697).

PAYNE, NEVIL: *The Fatal Jealousie* (1673).

PIX, MRS MARY: *The Spanish Wives* (1696), *The Deceiver Deceived* (1698).

PORDAGE, SAMUEL: *Herod and Mariamne* (1673), *The Siege of Babylon* (1678).

PORTER, THOMAS: *The Villain* (1663), *The Carnival* (1664).

POWELL, GEORGE. Various operas, comedies, and tragedies.

RAWLINS, THOMAS: *Tom Essence* (1677), *Tunbridge-Wells* (1678).

RHODES, RICHARD: *Flora's Vagaries* (1670; acted 1663).

RYMER, THOMAS: *Edgar* (1678).

ST SERFE, SIR THOMAS: *Tarugo's Wiles* (1668).

SEDLEY, SIR CHARLES: *The Mulberry-Garden* (1668), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1677), *Bellamira* (1687).

SOUTHERNE, THOMAS: *The Loyal Brother* (1682), *The Disappointment* (1684), *Sir Anthony Love* (1691), *The Fatal Marriage* (1694), *Oroonoko* (1696).

TUKE, SIR SAMUEL: *The Adventures of Five Hours* (1663).

WILMOT, JOHN, EARL OF ROCHESTER: *Valentinian* (1685).

ANONYMOUS: *The Mall* (1674), *The Mistaken Husband* (1675), *The Muse of New-Market* (1680), *Wit for Money* (1691).

(iii) 1700–50

AUBERT, MRS: *Harlequin-Hydaspes* (1719).

BAKER, THOMAS: *The Humour of the Age* (1701), *Tunbridge-Walks* (1703).

BECKINGHAM, CHARLES: *Scipio Africanus* (1718).

BOADENS, CHARLES: *The Modish Couple* (1732).

BOYLE, CHARLES, EARL OF ORRERY: *As you Find it* (1703).

BROOKE, HENRY: *Gustavus Vasa* (1739).

BULLOCK, CHRISTOPHER: *Woman's Revenge* (1715), *The Cobler of Preston* (1716), *Woman is a Riddle* (1717).

BURNABY, CHARLES: *The Reform'd Wife* (1700), *The Ladies' Visiting-Day* (1701), *The Modish Husband* (1702), *Love Betray'd* (1703).

CAREY, HENRY: *The Dragon of Wantley* (1737).

CHETWOOD, WILLIAM RUFUS: *The Lover's Opera* (1729).

CIBBER, THEOPHILUS: *Patie and Peggie* (1730), *The Harlot's Progress* (1733).

COFFEY, CHARLES: *The Beggar's Wedding* (1729), *The Devil to Pay* (1731).

DALTON, DR JOHN: *Comus* (1738).

DENNIS, JOHN: *Iphigenia* (1700), *The Comical Gallant* (1702), *The Invader of his Country* (1720).

FENTON, ELIJAH: *Mariamne* (1723).

GARRICK, DAVID. Important for his farces and adaptations of Shakespeare.

HAVARD, WILLIAM: *Scanderbeg* (1733), *King Charles the First* (1737).

HILL, AARON: *The Fatal Vision* (1716), *Zara* (1736), *Alzira* (1736).

HIPPISLEY, JOHN: *Flora* (1729).

HOADLY, DR BENJAMIN: *The Suspicious Husband* (1747).

HUGHES, JOHN: *The Siege of Damascus* (1720).

JOHNSON, CHARLES. An exceedingly interesting writer who touched almost all the types of dramatic activity in his time.

MARTYN, BENJAMIN: *Timoleon* (1730).

MILLER, JAMES: *The Mother-in-Law* (1734), *The Man of Taste* (1735), *The Universal Passion* (1737).

NORRIS, HENRY: *The Royal Merchant* (1706).

POPPLE, WILLIAM: *The Lady's Revenge* (1734), *The Double Deceit* (1735).

SAVAGE, RICHARD: *Love in a Veil* (1719), *Sir Thomas Overbury* (1724).

SEWELL, GEORGE: *The Tragedy of Sir Walter Raleigh* (1719).

SMYTHE, JAMES MOORE: *The Rival Modes* (1727).

TAVERNER, WILLIAM: *The Artful Husband* (1717).

THURMOND, JOHN. Various pantomimes.

YOUNG, EDWARD: *Busiris* (1719), *The Revenge* (1721).

(iv) 1750–1800

BENTLEY, R.: *The Wishes* (1761), *Philodamus* (1767).

BRAND, MISS HANNAH: *Huniades* (1792).

BROOKE, MRS FRANCES: *Virginia* (1756).

BROWN, JOHN: *Barbarossa* (1755), *Athelstan* (1756).

BURGOYNE, GENERAL JOHN: *The Lord of the Manor* (1780), *The Heiress* (1786).

COBB, JOHN: *The Strangers at Home* (1786), *The Haunted Tower* (1789).

CRISP, SAMUEL: *Virginia* (1754).

DELAP, JOHN: *Hecuba* (1761), *The Royal Suppliants* (1781).

FRANCKLIN, THOMAS: *The Earl of Warwick* (1766).

GLOVER, RICHARD: *Boadicia* (1753).

GRIFFITH, ELIZABETH: *The School for Rakes* (1769).

HAWKESWORTH, JOHN: *Edgar and Emmeline* (1761).

HOARE, PRINCE: *Indiscretion* (1800). Many translations from the German.

HOOLE, JOHN: *Cyrus* (1768), *Cleonice* (1775).

HULL, THOMAS: *Henry the Second* (1774).

JEPHSON, ROBERT: *Braganza* (1775), *The Count of Narbonne* (1781).

JONES, HENRY: *The Earl of Essex* (1753).

KEMBLE, JOHN P. Important for his adaptations of Shakespeare.

KENRICK, WILLIAM: *Falstaff's Wedding* (1760).

MACNALLY, L.: *Fashionable Levities* (1785).

MALLET, DAVID: *Eurydice* (1731), *Mustapha* (1739), *Elvira* (1763).

MASON, W.: *Elfrida* (1752), *Caractacus* (1759).

MORE, HANNAH: *Percy* (1785), *The Fatal Falsehood* (1779).

MORTON, T.: *Columbus* (1792), *Speed the Plough* (1798), *The School for Reform* (1805).

O'KEEFFE, JOHN. Important for his musical comedies.

REED, JOSEPH: *The Register Office* (1761).

SHERIDAN, MRS FRANCES: *The Discovery* (1763).

TOWNLEY, JAMES: *High Life below Stairs* (1759).

VAUGHAN, T.: *Loves Vagaries* (acted 1776; printed 1791).

WHITEHEAD, WILLIAM: *The Roman Father* (1750), *Creusa* (1754).

(v) THE ROMANTIC PERIOD (1800 TO THE SEVENTIES AND EIGHTIES)

ALBERY, JAMES: *Jingle* (1878), *The Two Roses* (1881).

ARNOLD, S. J.: *The Shipwreck* (1796), *The Devil's Bridge* (acted 1812; printed 1820).

BERNARD, W. B.: *The Passing Cloud* (1850).

BLANCHARD, E. L. L: *Faith, Hope and Charity* (1845).

BROOKS, C. W. S.: *The Exposition* (1851).

BROUGH, R. B.: *Kensington Gardens* (1851), *Alfred the Great* (1859).

BUCHANAN, R. W.: *Alone in London* (1885), *Sophia* (1886), *A Man's Shadow* (1889).

BUCKSTONE, J. B.: *The Flowers of the Forest* (1847), *Damon and Pithias* (1871).

BYRON, H. J.: *Uncle Dick's Darling* (1868), *Our Boys* (1875).

CRAVEN, H. T.: *Miriam's Crime* (1863), *Meg's Diversion* (1866).

FITZBALL, EDWARD: *Home Again* (1844). A prolific adapter of Scott.

GROVER, H. M.: *Socrates* (1828).

HARWOOD, ISABELLA ("ROSS NEIL"): *Inez* (1871), *The King and the Angel* (1874).

JERROLD, D. W.: *Beau Nash* (1834). A prolific writer of fair comedies and farces.

MATTHEWS, C. J.: *Married for Money* (1855).

MERITT, PAUL: *Linked by Love* (1872).

MERIVALE, H. C.: *All for Her* (1875), *Florien* (1884).

MONCRIEFF, W. T. Many adaptations.

OXENFORD, JOHN: *The Dice of Death* (1835).

PHILLIPS, WATTS: *The Woman in Mauve* (1864).

SIMS, GEORGE R. Many farces and light comedies.

STEVENSON, R. L.: *Deacon Brodie, Beau Austin, Admiral Guinea* (1892).

WILLS, W. G.: *Charles the First* (1873), *Faust* (1886).

(vi) The Modern Period (1860 to the Present Day)

Bax, Clifford: *Shakespeare* (with H. F. Rubinstein) (1921).

Boyle, William: *The Building Fund* (1905), *Family Failing* (1912).

Broughton, F. W.: *The Bailiff* (1893).

Cannan, Gilbert: *Miles Dixon* (1910), *Mary's Wedding* (1912).

Coward, Noel: *The Rat Trap* (1924), *The Vortex* (1925).

Down, Oliphant: *The Maker of Dreams* (1913), *Three One-Act Plays* (*The Dream-Child, Bal Masqué, Tommy-by-the-Way*) (1923).

Dukes, Ashley: *The Man with a Load of Mischief* (1925).

Esmond, H. V.: *Eliza comes to Stay* (1912), *The Law Divine* (1922).

Fagan, James Bernard: *The Wheel* (1922).

Gibson, W. W.: *Krindlesyke* (1922).

Glover, Halcott: *Wat Tyler* (1920).

Hamilton, Cosmo: *The Blindness of Virtue* (1908).

Housman, Laurence. Many poetic dramas.

MacEvoy, Charles: *David Ballard* (1907), *The Likes of Her* (1923).

Manners, J. Hartley: *Peg o' my Heart* (1913).

Mayne, Rutherford: *The Drone* (1908), *The Troth* (1909).

Monkhouse, Allan: *Four Tragedies* (*The Hayling Family, The Stricklands, Resentment, Reaping the Whirlwind*) (1913).

Moore, George: *The Strike at Arlingford* (1893), *The Apostle* (1911), *Esther Waters* (1913).

O'Brien, Seumas: *Duty* (1916).

Pearse, Padraic: *The Singer* (1918).

Rowley, Anthony: *A Weaver's Shuttle* (1910).

Sabatini, Rafael: *The Tyrant* (1925).

Vachell, H. A.: *Quinneys* (1915).

Zangwill, Israel: *The Melting Pot* (1908), *The Next Religion* (1912).

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